FOCUS ON

JOHN BYRNE

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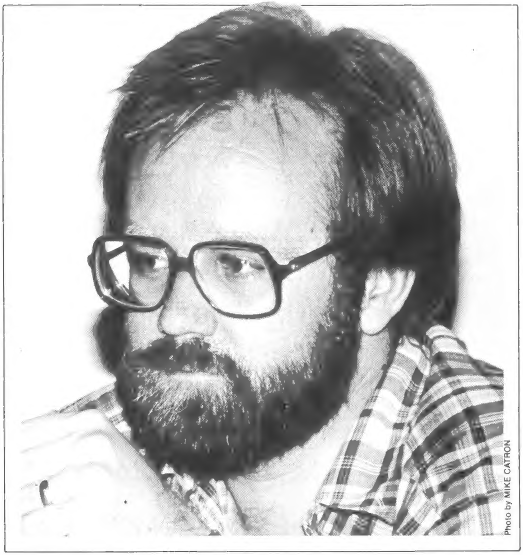
JOHN BYRNE



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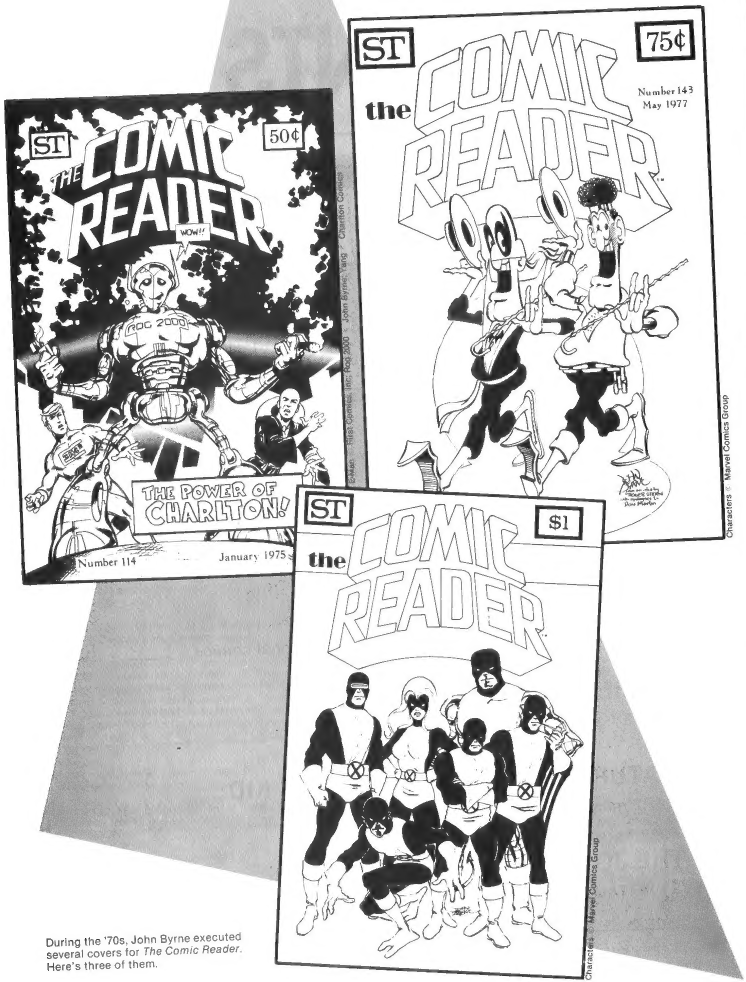

During the '70s, John Byrne executed several covers for *The Comic Reader*. Here's three of them.

INTRODUCTION

Far too rarely does a creative talent emerge who can lend both unique charm and individual vision to a comic book. Those writers or artists who have injected a new vitality into what had previously been static—if not downright moribund—titles could be counted on the fingers of one hand. Frank Miller did it on *Daredevil*, Walt Simonson did it on *Thor*, Alan Moore and Stephen Bissette did it on *Swamp Thing*, and Marv Wolfman and George Perez did it on the *Teen Titans*. There is one other, however, whose enthusiasm, coupled with prodigious talent and commitment, has resulted in a body of work that has simultaneously entertained and captivated comic-book fandom. His name is John Byrne.

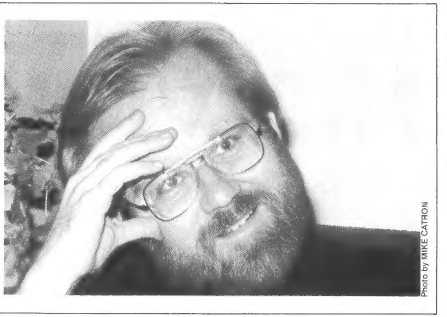

Photo by MIKE CARLIN

Throughout his career in comics, Byrne has broken molds and shattered icons, opting to exercise his own artistic urges, rather than following in footsteps already laid. Byrne's first professional work, *Rog 2000*, was a rare series of humor stories that grew out of characterization and situation. In a foreshadowing of his diverse abilities, Byrne's *Doomsday + 1* series was one of the few post-holocaust books *not* containing endless scenes of grotesque, shambling mutations or simply sheer chaos. Byrne's portrait was that of four people struggling merely to survive—a sort of SF variation on the literary theme of "man against nature."

Soon after his tenure at Charlton, Byrne moved to Marvel Comics. While some might deem it sufficient to sum up his career at Marvel by saying, "And the rest is history," such an off-handed summation of Byrne's career, no matter how complimentary its intentions, is to needlessly trivialize the work of a man who has rejuvenated his own small sector of the burgeoning Marvel Universe.

When Byrne started work on *The X-Men*, it was a title which was still struggling to plant its feet firmly on solid creative ground. Along with one of mainstream comics' most talented writers, Chris Claremont, the new *X-Men* could boast some of the most intriguing and popular characters in comics—all the book needed was a push in the right direction. With issue 108, *The X-Men* got that push. Byrne's intuitive sense of nuance and character, not to mention his stunning pencilling, transformed *The X-Men* into *the* super-hero comic book of the '70s and '80s. Byrne and Claremont's collaborative efforts set sales records in the direct-sales market, along with setting qualitative standards that few of their contemporaries have yet met. Probably no other super-hero comic has caused such excitement among comic book fans, apart from the Stan Lee-Jack Kirby *Fantastic Four*. . . which leads to another chapter of Byrne's career.

For years, the *Fantastic Four*, Marvel Comics' flagship book and what has become the embodiment of the modern comic book, had floundered creatively, caught in a limbo somewhere between ludicrous gods from outer space and hopelessly contrived personal crises. In July, 1981, issue 232 of the *Fantastic Four* appeared, titled (appropriately enough), "Back to the Basics." Since then, Byrne has made apt the catchphrase, "The World's Greatest Comic Magazine." He has shown us sights that fandom could previously only wonder about—for example, in issue 236, readers glimpsed what life would have been like had Reed, Sue, Ben, and Johnny never taken that fateful trip into space.

Byrne's own creation, *Alpha Flight*, is an artistic nod to his Canadian homeland. The diversity of the characterizations, and their unusual rapport with one another, rests as proof that Byrne shares an intense involvement with the lives of the group's members. Though Alpha Flight first appeared in the pages of Byrne and Claremont's *X-Men*, Byrne has since taken them entirely under his creative wing, allowing them to grow and develop in their own right.

Placing emphasis on characterization over slugfests, Byrne has more sharply delineated the personalities of the FF and Alpha Flight, as well as their supporting characters. Sharing the intensely personal loss of Sue's unborn child, watching the Thing learn to cope with his lot in life—such incidents reveal a man who not only loves his characters, but who also wants us to love them.

That man is John Byrne.

—LAWRENCE K. SPEERLOOP

THE JOHN BYRNE INTERVIEW

If I say I'm a gynecologist, people don't ask for a detailed description. You say cartoonist, and they go "What?"

The Man of the Hour talks about his childhood comic books, Marvel Comics, stereotypes, characterization, the Fantastic Four, death, Alpha Flight, being a comics artist, and more . . .

by Peter Sanderson

SANDERSON: *First question. What did you most like about comics when you first discovered them?*
BYRNE: Boy. Okay, I have to go back a long ways for that one. Let's see, I think I was about six years old and I was in England so what probably appealed to me the most was that they were not bland. I think the English comics of the period were notoriously bland.
SANDERSON: *So we are talking about your discovery of American comics?*
BYRNE: Yes.
SANDERSON: *Did you like English comics when you first saw them?*
BYRNE: Well, English comics you can't even discuss in the same breath with American comics, I think, because they are so totally, or were so totally different from anything done in the United States. They had a weekly format and serialized stories for the most part. They were very, very pretty and for the most part very easy to read.
SANDERSON: *And this was pre-Modesty Blaise and Judge Dredd?*
BYRNE: Oh, very pre-. In fact, as far as my reading experience, this was pre-*Dan Dare*. I mean, Dan Dare was born in the same year I was, but I didn't discover him until I was about eight. When I was first discovering comics, it was Andy Panda. I didn't even read the more flamboyant ones which were perhaps a little too rough for me or some such thing.
SANDERSON: *So they did have action genre comics?*
BYRNE: They did have the the strange kind of action genre that the British do. *Eagle* was running then, and it was full of such things as *Dan Dare* and *Luck of the Legion*, which was a Foreign Legionnaire series. There was a western strip, the title of which I can't remember offhand. It was interesting to me because the Indians, as I remember, said "How" and it was spelled "Hough." But above and beyond that, the stuff I was reading at the time was very low-key, very bland. It struck me as a lot of fun as a five or six year old, but when I discovered American comics, it was like a whole new experience because here was Super-

Photo by MIKE CATRON

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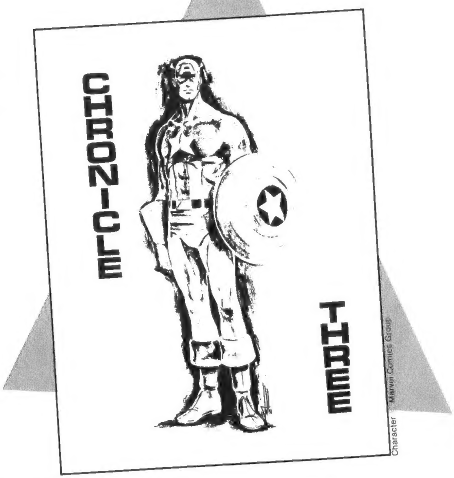


An early-'70s example of Byrne's fanzine work: *Chronicle* #3, from 1973.

man picking up buildings and flying and all kinds of things that I'd never conceived of anybody doing. And so it was an incredible rebirth, or reawakening of things I had only vaguely encountered before.

SANDERSON: *What kind of emotional satisfaction did comics provide for you at that time that, say, television, movies, books did not?*

BYRNE: I think the major satisfaction that I got out of comics over anything else, was the permanence of them. I could enjoy the comic, and then I could take it out and enjoy it again, which I couldn't do with a TV show. The enlightened youth of today [with video recorders] are unaware of the concept of the TV show that you can't take down off the shelf and watch again. And that was what was very appealing to me about comics, because I wasn't really into books at that point, the kind of books that don't have pictures in them.

SANDERSON: *Do you think now that video tape recorders are becoming more prevalent that it will cut into the appeal of comics to newcomers?*

BYRNE: Only if they can do on videotape what we do in the comics, and I don't think they can produce *Superman* on a weekly basis, the movie anyway, and that's what the kids will expect if it's ever going to really damage the comics. Besides which, I think we'd be inclined to get into that market if we see a viable kind of thing to do. I can see Marvel Productions or somebody turning out a video comic book that would do the job, because obviously things are changing constantly.

SANDERSON: *When you started reading American comics, it was the [Mort] Weisinger* Supermans, *I take it.*

BYRNE: Yes, I would guess it was at that period. It may have been earlier than that. It's hard to judge because they were all reprints and there was no chronology to it. I know that it was towards the end of my reading that the Curt Swan stuff started to appear in England, and that was on *Jimmy Olsen*. So if you want to try to date the vintage from that, *Superman* was mostly drawn by Wayne Boring, and whoever was doing the Superboy stuff; I know I never cared for it much. But it was very early Bob Kane and Dick Sprang on Batman.

SANDERSON: *Now some people would say that '50s and early '60s* Supermans *were fairly bland.*

BYRNE: They were [*laughs*], but not compared to what I was familiar with. You have to remember that this was extremely low key stuff being done by the British. It was all very charming and wonderful and fun but it just did not have the impact [that American comics did]. I think the [comparison between British and American comics] was kind of a culture shock thing, really. But somebody who was simultaneously familiar with both genres would not really hold up a British comic and an American comic saying this one was bland and this one isn't. He would look at them and say this is doing this and this is doing something else. There wouldn't be a comparison. But for me, encountering the American comics sort of out of the blue one day was very dramatic because of the difference.

SANDERSON: *I can see why you'd like Superman because of the lifting buildings and such. But*

Another fanzine drawing: John Stewart, Earth's other Green Lantern.

From 1973. a nasty-looking alien with a big gun.

apparently you liked Batman even better when you found that.

BYRNE: Yes, and I'm not altogether sure why, but there was something terrifically appealing about the character.

SANDERSON: *Was it, to follow a theme of yours in the FF, that he's an ordinary person with no super powers who made himself into a super-hero?*

BYRNE: Possibly. That is the basic appeal of the character. Somewhere in the back of our minds lurks the notion that while we can never be Superman, we might someday be Batman.

SANDERSON: *Nowadays one might say the reason for Batman's appeal was that dark edge of the character, but that wasn't really present then.*

BYRNE: No, the very first Batman story I read was, I assume, written by Bill Finger because it had all the giant props in it: globes on top of buildings and giant vats of ink. It was very bright and very colorful and not at all the Batman we read now. But it was drawn by Dick Sprang and it was great, with Batman's jutting square jaw, people leaping about, and the old Batmobile which looked very much like a tank with a fin on it. It seized my attention like nothing had before. And that same comic was a very peculiar kind of amalgam, because in that same issue was a Superboy story and a Johnny Quick story and they both interested me very much, although that was the only Johnny Quick story I ever read, oddly enough.

SANDERSON: *I'm surprised that they were still printing them at that time.*

BYRNE: It was probably a reprint.

SANDERSON: *And then you came across Marvels. Was* Fantastic Four *#5 the first one?*

BYRNE: That was the first one that made me genuinely aware that this was another [super-hero] comic company. I had seen *FF #3* in a barber shop and I sort of thumbed through it and said this isn't DC and put it back down again. And it hadn't even registered as being a super-hero comic. I somehow managed to get the idea that the main characters were villains and I think the presence of the Thing gave me the impression that it was just another one of those monster books that I didn't read anyway.

SANDERSON: *It's interesting that people would have that idea back then, which would be unthinkable now; that just looking at the Thing, you immediately assume he's a villain.*

BYRNE: Yes, well, [*laughs*] that shows you where the character's gone wrong over the years, and it's something that we are trying to put back.

SANDERSON: *But what I also mean is that the concept of monster as hero was not present in superhero comics of that time.*

BYRNE: No, he couldn't exist at all. And the concept of him being a monster has softened and blurred over the last 10 years up to the point where, you may recall, a few years ago, Marv Wolfman was able to do a story in which a little black mutant child created a monstrous Fantastic Four including a monstrous Thing [*Fantastic Four #203*]. This made me sort of pause for a moment, and say, "Wait a minute, how can you create a monstrous Thing? The Thing is a monster!" I think that was when I realized that the whole concept of the book had been lost somewhere.

SANDERSON: *Now, when you came across* The FF, *what was it that made you realize that it was published by a different company, and had stories that I take it, you found more exciting than the DC's?*

BYRNE: Well, I definitely found them more exciting. I could always tell when it wasn't a DC comic, because all the other companies' books looked different. And I'm sure you remember as I do that Marvel had gray covers with brown logos, and wonderful things like that, and there was no way you could visually confuse a DC and a Marvel book. And as I've said elsewhere, I debated for a long time before I actually bought *FF #5*. And when I did finally get it and read it, it was such a totally different thing than what I was familiar with, that it left me definitely breathless and

Robin the Boy Wonder (1973).

panting for the next issue, which of course was two months away in those days.

SANDERSON: *What specific things was it that made you feel that way: the art style, the characterizations, the storyline?*

BYRNE: Yes [*laughs*]. All of the above. The art was fabulous in that first issue I saw, issue 5. I think that was Joe Sinnott and [Jack] Kirby before he really turned into Kirby, and it was just the most amazing experience compared to reading Superman and Batman, which I very much enjoyed even though I had decided at the ripe old age of 11 that I could draw much better than Bob Kane. But it was just so different from anything I had seen before. Of course, when other Marvel books started to turn up and they too were different, it was just, I don't know...a semi-religious experience I think.

SANDERSON: *Well, first of all in* The Fantastic Four, *you didn't have the secret identity shtick, you had people who went around calling people by their first names, you could see their faces unmasked all the time, they didn't look like Superman, the villain [Dr. Doom] was so interesting and wasn't a typical DC gimmick-oriented villain...*

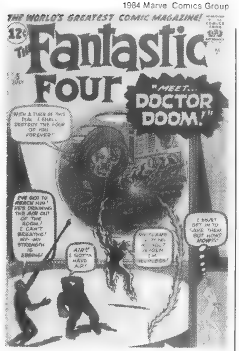
BYRNE: Exactly. And got away at the end, which was something new to me. At DC it seemed that the only way a villain ever got away was if he was killed. He would be resurrected, naturally, in time for next issue, in the Joker's case, but it's really hard to put into words the impact of that first issue on me. It was just a gigantically emotional experience.

SANDERSON: *When you think about it, the Torch is sort of monstrous looking too.*

BYRNE: Oh, yeah.

SANDERSON: *So that since you had come to the FF at least with the idea that the Thing was a bad guy, how did you react when you read the story and found that these two were really appealing?*

BYRNE: Well, it required a total rethinking on several levels. It required a major rethink to accept the idea that anything that didn't come from DC could actually be readable and the DC police wouldn't come and throw me in jail



The comic that started it all for Byrne

for daring to read something else. I was ferociously loyal in those days and still am to specific companies. And I used to have a great deal of trouble with new companies or what I perceived as new companies, and since I hadn't been reading the monster books *Journey into Mystery* and *Tales to Astonish* and all that, Marvel was new to me. And then, getting into what you said about the personalities being real, and these very strange characters: this very monstrous character, this rather frightening image of a young man bursting into flame, apparently to no permanent personal injury. It was all very alien and very marvelous to my pre-adolescent mind.

SANDERSON: *Now this was the actual* FF *#5 you saw, not a reprint?*

BYRNE: This was the real thing. I was 11 years old.

SANDERSON: *Are you in England at this point?*

BYRNE: No, at this point, I'm in Canada.

SANDERSON: *So you seized upon other Marvels. Did you like them all equally, or did you have particular favorites apart from the FF?*

BYRNE: My parents very much restricted the number of comics I was allowed to buy in those days, so even though *FF #5* has sequences in it that function as an ad for the first issue of *The Hulk*, I was not allowed to buy or read the first issue of *The Hulk*. So the next Marvel character I actually read would have been Spider-Man, whom I encountered in his first issue, not in *Amazing Fantasy*. I didn't know about *Amazing Fantasy* until a couple of years later. So I was very keenly watching out for anything that looked like it might come from the same place that the *Fantastic Four* did, and when Spider-Man came along...

SANDERSON: *...with the FF on the cover, which was a help...*

BYRNE: Which sure helps a lot [*laughs*]! That was one of the ways in which I was able to convince my parents to buy it. "Look, it's got the Fantastic Four in it!" Somewhat later I convinced them to let me buy *Strange Tales* because it had the Human Torch in it. And that was how I sort of sideways discovered the Ditko monster-weird stories. But I generally kept my eyes peeled, and the funny thing was in those days, I never really cared much for characters like Iron Man and Thor and Ant-Man/Giant-Man in their own books, but I loved them in *The Avengers*. So it never troubled me much that my parents never let me buy *Iron Man*, *Thor* and *Tales to Astonish*, or whatever they were appearing in, because I just bought *The Avengers* and that was great. It had all of them and I like them working together anyway. And, of course, *The X-Men*.

SANDERSON: *Is it because somehow that those characters didn't make as strong an impression on you as the FF, Spider-Man, and the Hulk did?*

BYRNE: I'm not sure why that was exactly. Because Iron Man made a phenomenal impression on me. I thought Iron Man was the greatest thing since sliced bread. In his early clunky gray incarnation, I thought he was just great, but for some reason I just could not relate to him in his own book. I really enjoyed the character mostly in *The Avengers*. Possibly [it was because of] the difference in artwork. I was something of an artwork snob too at that point and had really adopted Jack Kirby as my god at the time. And Iron Man, of course, was drawn by Don Heck in those days.

SANDERSON: *Is it because you thought that Thor and Giant Man*

were similar to the kinds of heroes at DC?

BYRNE: Possibly. It was also the fact that I had a very long term memory for comics in those days, and Batman had fought a character named Thor with the hammer and the whole thing not too terribly long before that. And I was wondering how that could be Thor, because this guy over here was Thor, and that whole Batman story was very similar, with a wimpy guy turning into Thor and all that.

SANDERSON: *So you kept reading the FF until you got to the infamous issue where you guessed who the mystery villain was.*

BYRNE: Yes. Issue 32. The cover banner was something like "Can you guess the identity of our mystery villain?" On page 3 or 4, I said Super Skrull. And it was.

SANDERSON: *In past interviews this seems like some sort of climactic event. It seems as if it was such a trauma that you figured out it was the Super Skrull that you gave comics up for several years. There must have been more to it than that.*

BYRNE: Well, there was. There was my parents constantly saying, "I think you're too old to read comics." I was by this time 14 or 15, the fact that this book was touting this character as a surprise mystery villain and I guessed who it was then more or less indicated to me that I had passed a certain level. Something must have happened. Either I had undergone a quantum leap in intelligence or else the books had dropped or I had discovered girls or something to make the comics not the major focus of my interests any more.

SANDERSON: *Do you think that you were just getting bored with comics overall at that point?*

BYRNE: Yeah, I think I was probably looking for an excuse to stop reading. Something that functioned for me as a legitimate excuse to stop reading, rather than my parents telling me not to or the kids at school making fun of me or whatever.

SANDERSON: *Did they?*

BYRNE: To some extent. I was always doodling super-heroes in the margins of my notebooks. And this was a source of great mirth and merriment to my peer group who, by this time, discovered much more mature reading material, like *Playboy*.

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Two decades later, Byrne got to caricature himself on the cover of *Fantastic Four*!

SANDERSON: *What do your parents think about comics now?*

BYRNE: Well, obviously [*laughs*] there's been a major change in thought there. I often tell my parents that I hate doing comics for a living and that I'm only doing it to spite them. No, they now realize that this is not quite the total absolute waste of time and money that they used to think it was. Or they somehow managed to justify in their minds that I'm not completely wasting my life.

SANDERSON: *Do they see it as an interesting way to make money or do they actually see some worth in the product?*

BYRNE: I think they see it as a combination of both. My father was the longest in coming around. He called me a commercial artist for the longest time. I would keep saying "Cartoonist, Dad, I draw comic books." And then finally I did *Spider-Man* and something clicked in his head. "Oh, yeah, I remember that. I read a few of those, they were pretty good." And now he calls me a cartoonist.

SANDERSON: *When you got back into reading them, that was about the time of the death of Gwen Stacy?*

BYRNE: Yes, that was the first *Spider-Man* I bought on my return.

SANDERSON: *What motivated you to return, to actually pick this comic book up?*

BYRNE: That's hard to say, I had drifted in and out a couple of times, not buying anything but checking them out on the stands to see what was happening and mostly being utterly confused by what was happening. And then I started to draw my own comics. And I'm not exactly sure what the mechanics were. I can tell you the exact place and time and everything of when and where and how I bought that *Spider-Man*, but I can't tell you why I bought it, which is very odd. I

think it was because it had "Somebody Croaks This Issue!" on the cover and I thought "Oh, boy, Aunt May." And then I picked it up and was totally confused. I had never heard of Gwen Stacy. The last time I looked Peter Parker's girlfriend was Betty Brant.

SANDERSON: *But there must have been something exciting about the issue even if you didn't know the lady in question.*

BYRNE: Exciting enought to make me want to buy the next one, you mean?

SANDERSON: *Something intriguing about it.*

BYRNE: Well, there was something, but I'm not sure what it was. It's funny to look back. I'm not even sure whether that was the first Marvel of my return. I may have bought a *Fantastic Four* before that. Because I started buying sort of all in a rush, and this would have been 1971, I guess.

SANDERSON: *And you were how old by this time?*

BYRNE: 21.

SANDERSON: *And for that matter, you must have been surprised to see Stan Lee and Jack Kirby had taken off for parts unknown?*

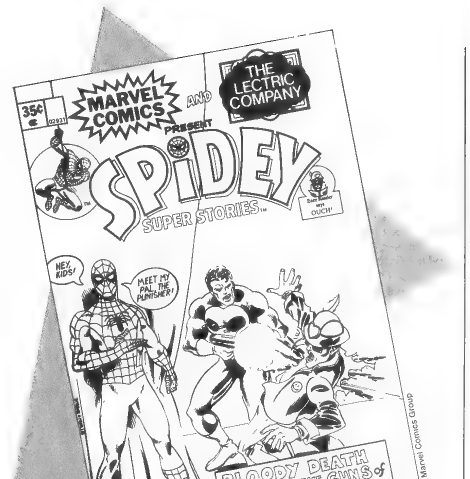
BYRNE: Yes, that was disturbing.

SANDERSON: *Did they provide the same sort of satisfaction for you on returning?*

BYRNE: No, not at all.

SANDERSON: *Why is that?*

BYRNE: That's hard to say. There was definitely something missing and whatever that something is that I perceived as missing is what I'm trying to put back now. And it's purely a gut reaction kind of thing. So I picked up that *Spider-Man*—which had some interesting artwork. I think that was Gil Kane and John Romita then. So it sure looked good and the Green Goblin was interesting, because I don't think that I encountered the Green Goblin in the early days. I missed a few issues, I know that. And then what I did shortly after my return, as it were, was to just go out and buy all the back issues, which in those days was easy to do because not everybody was aware of what they were worth. So I was able to get everything I missed and sit down and read all that stuff in one sitting. And catch up and see it go away.



From the days of *Spidey Super Stories*, a silly cover by Roger Stern and Byrne

See whatever that mystical thing was that had been there when I was reading x-number of years before disappear. And not even while watching it go to be able to tie it down and say this is what's leaving. It's one of those emotional inside-my-head type of things that's very hard to put into words. When people confront me and ask me what's wrong with comics and I'll go "ah...uh" because I can't say, "This is missing." But there definitely seemed to be something missing. And *The Fantastic Four* was just not there at all as far as I was concerned. I came back with #132, exactly 100 issues after I had left, and we were in the middle of the Omega-thing in the Hidden Land, and I didn't know who the Inhumans were or who the Alpha Primitives were I didn't know Crystal and Quicksilver. I came in on the second part of a three-part story. So it was all very confusing. And that was all part and parcel of what was missing. I had picked up *FF* #5, having missed the first four issues, and yet I had no trouble whatsoever understanding who these people were and why they were doing what they were doing. And when I picked up #132, even though I had read the first 32 issues, I had no idea who these people were or why they were doing what they were doing.

SANDERSON: *And you mean the FF as well?*

BYRNE: The FF as well.

SANDERSON: *When you do an issue of the* FF *say, with the Inhumans, in which six or seven characters suddenly appear, might not new readers be similarly confused at least for a few pages?*

BYRNE: Well, I hope it won't be for more than a few pages. There's nothing wrong with the reader being

confused as long as that confusion does not last past the end of the book. There was the old first-three-pages rule that never really existed in which you have to establish who these guys are and what they are and why they are doing this all in the first three pages because otherwise the reader will be confused. That's an arbitrary, very extreme, reaction to what was a definite problem. People were forgetting that every issue is the first issue for somebody. My rule in creating the things is that you have to know who everybody is and what they do and why they're doing it by the last page of every issue. So if I have the Inhumans charging around and I know perhaps they aren't going to be doing much in that particular issue, then I will regretfully fall back on the old caption-above-the-person's-head thing with "Here he is. Here is what he does." But I will try to have the people doing something that is in character and speaking in character and having other people call them by names or variations on their names as often as possible so that it will sink into the kiddies so that by the end of the issue, they, hopefully, will not be confused. I hope I haven't confused anybody. Unless I did it on purpose.

SANDERSON: *In fact, as far as things like who the good guys and bad guys are, they should be enlightened even earlier on so that they can get something out of the story.*

BYRNE: Preferably, yes. It is nice if you don't get halfway through the book and find out you've been rooting for the wrong guy.

SANDERSON: *What satisfactions do you get out of comics now, whether as writer-artist or as reader?*

BYRNE: As writer-artist I get a phenomenal amount of satisfaction because it's just a terrific amount of fun to be doing this instead of working. As a reader, I get very little satisfaction. There's not a whole lot that I read these days. Unfortunately, most of the comics that I used to read are currently being done by people I consider close personal friends, and I resist reading stuff that's done by close personal friends, just in case I might not like it. If I read Roger Stern's latest issue of *Spider-Man* and I don't like it, how do I deal with that? Fortunately, for the most part, I very much enjoy what Roger does. But it makes it hard to approach the books in the same way that I used to when I was strictly a fan. When you cross that semi-intangible line between fandom and prodom it takes a little bit of the magic away and it's hard to capture the same kind of thrill that I used to have.

SANDERSON: *Is it that you can't read the stories innocently because you know the technical aspects of putting the stories together and you're always looking at craft?*

BYRNE: Well, that is very much a problem, especially now that I've started writing the things as well. It makes it very difficult to simply read a comic, because I'm constantly confronted with questions A and B, A being "Why did they do that? I wouldn't have done it," and B being, "Boy, I wish I'd done that. Why didn't I?" So that makes it hard to just read them for their own sake.

SANDERSON: *Which ones do you enjoy now or have enjoyed in the past?*

BYRNE: In my whole history of reading comics I have enjoyed most of the big guns: *Superman, Batman, Green Lantern*, things like that. I haven't read too much of the so-called Golden Age. Those things that I have read I either enjoyed a lot or hated a lot, depending on how I was feeling at a given time. There have been various craftsmen through the years whose work I have enjoyed. If you want to limit it strictly to comic books, so that we don't drift off into people like Will Eisner...

SANDERSON: *Oh, we can.*

BYRNE: Okay, we can. I like Will Eisner a whole lot. For artists, I've

Sketch done during the time when Byrne was pencilling *The Avengers*, Fantastic Four, and *X-Men*

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obviously enjoyed the range from Jack Kirby to Frank Miller, which covers about 40 years right there. People like Gil Kane, Neal Adams, Dick Sprang, and any of the several Bob Kanes. They always entertained me. As for the writing, I've obviously enjoyed Stan [Lee]. I don't know who I've enjoyed at DC since they never had credits in those days. I can say I enjoyed this story, but I don't know who wrote it. I enjoyed a lot of what Steve Gerber was doing in books like *Man-Thing*. In fact, Gerber is responsible for one of the three comic stories that ever made me cry. And that was the "Night of the Laughing Dead" story in *Man-Thing*. But there are so many people who have done so many wonderful things, that it's hard to pick out this one and this one and this one and say they shine especially.

SANDERSON: *Well, what are the elements of a super-hero or comics adventure story in general that entertain you the most, that you feel are most important to get in there?*

BYRNE: I like it when the hero doesn't do whatever it is he's doing too easily. I think that's one of the things, for example, that is wrong with Superman nowadays. Everything is far too easy for him. I like it when I get a real sense of achievement out of the hero doing whatever it is he does, so that you say "Hey, this is neat, only he could have done this." There should be legitimate heroics on the part of the hero, and legitimate villainy on the part of the villain for that matter. I like to see a real sense of threat on the part of the villain. This is one reason I don't like what [Jim] Shooter calls headquarters stories, where we see the heroes doing their thing around their headquarters and then the villain comes and attacks them. Because, for the most part, I don't have any real sense of major threat. It's a threat to the heroes, but if they lose, it's like "Oh, that's too bad, the heroes lost. I'll have to read another book because they're dead now." But there's no sense of them having achieved a major feat, which might even be saving a two-year-old kid playing on a street and who might have gotten hurt in this battle. That to me is important in the sense that the heroes are there to protect *us*, and that the villains are there to be villainous to *us*, not simply to repeatedly attack the heroes because they don't like the heroes any more. This is an inevitable problem of course, since once the villain has attacked the heroes once and lost, he really doesn't need any major justification other than the fact that he has to beat these guys because they beat him once. This is why I try very hard with my stories to introduce some other reason why Dr. Doom would be attacking the Fantastic Four or Galactus would return to Earth for the 3,000th time. I like that sense of purpose. I suppose that's the word I'm looking for.

You should also be able to say [about a hero's story], "Hey, this is neat. Only he could have done this." That something has actually happened here that couldn't have happened anywhere else. That because these people came together in this situation, these events happened. These heroes got the chance to be heroic in exactly the way that they are heroic. That The Thing did something that the Human Torch couldn't and the Torch did something that the Thing couldn't And the Fantastic Four did something that the Avengers

Marvel's all-time greatest villain himself, from *Fantastic Four* #247.

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couldn't. I think that's the charm of the whole genre. This is one reason that I'm down on what are called generic comic book stories. Let's say *Avengers* editor rejects comic writer A's story, so comic writer A walks across to DC and sells it as a *Justice League* story with no major change in the story, only the characters are different. When you do something like that, it's a generic comic book story, and should never really appear in print.

SANDERSON: *What about your* What If? *in which the FF take on the Mole Man without their powers and still manage to beat him. Isn't this in a way, a violation of your rule?*

BYRNE: No, because they are still being heroes, and as far as I'm concerned, if you look at those early issues of *The Fantastic Four*, the significant thing about them is that the powers are not what's important, the people are important. And I think that my *What If?* underlined that these people have the ability or the chutzpah to defeat the Mole Man. They didn't necessarily need the powers. The powers just made it a little easier.

SANDERSON: *So, in short, this is a story that could occur specifically for the FF and no other heroes, whether they had powers or not. It depends on the kind of people that they are.*

BYRNE: Exactly. Ideally, that should be any comic book story. We should not be doing generic stories, wherein you insert Hero A and Villain B into any story you want. I think that's the trouble with a lot of the stories that you see nowadays. It's so obvious that the writer began with a Dr. Doom story, instead of saying "Let's do a story in which thus and such happens and this happens and hey, this would be a good place to use Dr. Doom." And I was guilty of this too, when I was working with Chris on *The X-Men*. There were many instances where we just said "Let's do a Magneto story." Rather than thinking of a story that has these events and then realizing that this would be a good place to use Magneto.

SANDERSON: *What else do you think goes to make a good comics hero?*

AN EYE FOR AN EYE.. X-MEN
YOU WILL NOT DIE, BUT YOU WILL BOOM WISH YOU HAD. YOU WILL SUFFER. AS I SUFFERED--TO BE AWARE OF WHO AND WHAT YOU ARE..
..TO EACH POSSESS YOUR POWERS IN THEIR FULLEST MEASURE, YET TO BE AS UNABLE TO USE THEM AS A SIX-MONTH OLD CHILD. TO BE... HELPLESS.
IF THERE IS A HELL... WHEN SLAIN, IT CANNOT BE MORE TERRIBLE THAN THIS
© 1984 Marvel Comics Group

Another classic villain Magneto, from *X-Men* #112 [Inks by Terry Austin]

BYRNE: They do have to be role models, don't they? They have to have a kind of transcendent goodness about them. Like what Len Wein said about goodness always triumphing over evil because it's nicer. In many ways, that's true, that is the bottom line of every comic story, that reaffirmation of good triumphing over evil. The trick then is to make that triumph interesting, which is usually best acheived by making the evil interesting, or sympathetic or something that one might look at and say, "Oh, was this necessarily a good triumph over evil."

SANDERSON: *Well, there's another side to that too which is not just ambiguity about the evil but ambiguity about the good, with reference to Wolverine, a character which you like a great deal, but can be characterized as the Psycho-as-Hero.*

BYRNE: Oh, sure.

SANDERSON: *And the question here is, when you have a hero like that, is that somehow diluting the ideal of what a comic book hero should be, since he's far more violent, far more tolerant towards killing than the archetypal role model is.*

BYRNE: I think handled correctly, which is something I myself never did while I was doing *The X-Men*. I never really got the proper handle on how Wolverine should have been handled. Handled correctly, Wolverine should serve to reaffirm the good triumphs over evil aspect of the other characters rather than of himself, because this guy is obviously a psycho, not well in his mind. And so we cannot hold him up and say "Here's a good role model, kids." But what we can do is to say look at the other X-Men and see how in the process of fighting villains and generally saving the world for truth, justice, and the American way, they are also dealing with this time bomb ticking away in their midst, which is Wolverine. That scene I've talked about before with him casually disemboweling one of the X-Men and then

Sue Storm Richards.

NOT AT ALL, FATHER. IT'S JUST THAT YOU DON'T HAVE A SPECIAL BELT-BUCKLE SOLENOID, LIKE WE MEMBERS OF THE FF DO.
4
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"Handled correctly, Wolverine should serve to reaffirm that good triumphs over evil." [Inks by Terry Austin.]

sort of going "oops" because he's realized he's done it, could be a very telling scene if such a thing could be done. Because it would underline exactly who and what Wolverine really is and it would also underline how the rest of the X-Men are dealing with him. And I don't think it would serve in any way to diminish the character of Wolverine, the hair-trigger, the danger of Wolverine, the major selling factor of the character. Where Chris and I went wrong was in trying to justify what he is instead of just cutting loose and saying "Look out kids, you don't want to be in the same room with this guy."

SANDERSON: *For that matter since you say that super-hero stories should provide this reaffirmation at the end, what do you think of the criticism nowadays that there's too much death and real violence in comics, keeping in mind that you've been saying that you're going to have Galactus eat the Skrull Home World and maybe kill off a member of Alpha Flight, and had planned to have Wolverine kill Sabre-tooth, and kill Mariko...*

BYRNE: Well, when you list it like that, it sounds like I have nothing planned but death. There is a great deal of death in comics. I don't think there is too much death in comics. I think there is too much resurrection in comics. That's my problem. For the most part, what you'll be finding in John Byrne books is that if the character is said to be dead by the omnipotent narrator, then they will be dead, they will be permanent. The thing is that in comics, it should be as real as death in the real world. I was offended by the resurrection of Elektra, until I sat down and actually read it again, and realized that a price had been paid. And there was a logical structure, in which Elektra had been resurrected, quote-unquote, in this instance.

SANDERSON: *What do you mean that a price had been paid?*

BYRNE: Because what we seem to have with the resurrection of Elektra is not really a resurrection but the animation of a body with what seems to be another spirit inhabiting it. Because the physical body of the man, Stone, is gone when Elektra rises. And what one gets is the sense that Stone has sacrificed his own life, or his own personality, in order to put his life force into a cleansed Elektra. So we're not talking about "Here's the return of Elektra," we're talking about a whole new set of parameters that probably have created a whole new personality. In a situation in which we were to, say, bring back Dark Phoenix, what we would end up with was Dark Phoenix because that was a personality unto itself. That would be a really cheap resurrection because there would be no way to get around the fact that that would mean that Jean Grey died for nothing if Dark Phoenix comes back. So if I was to kill Dr. Doom and make it an obvious real death, then it would be very cheap and sleazy of me to come back and say "Ha, fooled you."

SANDERSON: *How about Professor Xavier's [seeming] death [in X-Men #42]? Do you think it was a mistake to bring him back?*

BYRNE: I think that probably should have been thought through a little more carefully. We're talking about something that happened in a very mixed up time for *The X-Men*, when just about anything was being done in order to make that book work better. Bringing him back was more of a mistake than killing him, especially with what I consider a very cheap way of bringing him back. "Ha, it wasn't really him who died." Especially having Marvel Girl being a party to it. It's one of those retroactive corrections of things that have gone on before that works only if you don't really pay a whole lot of attention to what's really gone on before. I mean, I read the resurrection story before I read the death story and the resurrection works perfectly until I read the death. It was a nice death and this guy really should have been left for dead. This is an important thing that's happened and now it's gone.

SANDERSON: *Do you think that comics have gotten to the point now*

Cover by Byrne and Joe Rubinstein.

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Another whimsical John Byrne sketch

that this kind of deep emotion that can be evoked by death is hard to achieve because we've seen so many resurrections, so many reformations reversed, and things going back and forth continually?

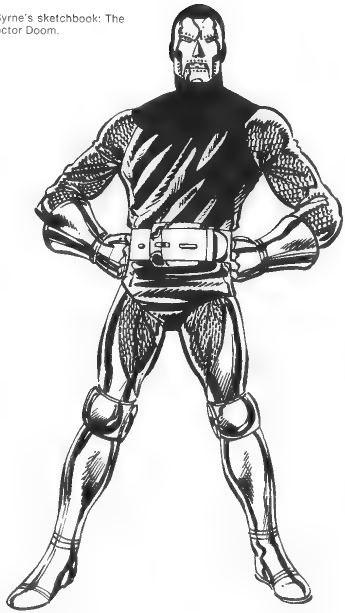
BYRNE: Yeah. Well, we went through a very bad period, comics in general and Marvel specifically. And we refer to this period as the '70s, where people were dropping like flies and rising like Christ every three and a half pages, as a result of which a fan's first reaction to a death in comics now is, "When are you going to bring him back?" And, to me, that should not be his first reaction. Now whether I'm reading my own press or not, I don't know. But I seem to have somehow generated an emotion among many fans that they believe my death scenes. And I think it's largely because of things I've said to you, Peter, about planning to kill Franklin and Alicia [so that fans were] expecting me to kill Franklin and Alicia. And when I "killed" Maximus and when I "killed" Puppet Master, everybody went through the roof because I had killed Maximus and the Puppet Master. The fact that the omnipotent narrator never once said they were dead didn't enter into it. It was like "My God, Byrne's killing everyone in sight!" So, perhaps in this narrow context of the Fantastic Four, death is starting to have a little more meaning. I hope it is. I hope that when I do actually kill somebody it will have a terrific impact on the kiddies.

SANDERSON: *The problem here is that when you work for a company like Marvel and you don't own the characters, you cannot necessarily control what happens to them.*

BYRNE: That's true.

SANDERSON: *How much control do you have over the FF characters?*

BYRNE: Well, hopefully, absolute control over the six main characters in the Fantastic Four, which are the Fantastic Four themselves, Franklin, and Alicia. If I were to actually, say, kill Franklin, Roger Stern or Bill Mantlo or Chris Claremont or David Michelinie would not see that as an



From Byrne's sketchbook: The new Doctor Doom.

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opportunity to resurrect him in one of their books. Hopefully, they would just say that that is something that Byrne is doing in his book and it doesn't affect my book and so I'll leave it alone. If I were to start insinuating tentacles into the other books...if I were to do a Fantastic Four story in which I kill J. Jonah Jameson, [*laughs*] then it would obviously be stepping far outside my proper bounds and Roger Stern or Bill Mantlo would be absolutely within their rights to do a story that put it to the lie.

SANDERSON: *But what about control over characters like Dr. Doom, Galactus...?*

BYRNE: Well, so far, I haven't "killed" either of those guys. I did put Dr. Doom into a nasty situation at the end of the 20th anniversary issue, and I was not 100 percent satisfied with the way that Bill dealt with that in *The Micronauts*, but it was not an untenable situation. And when I was ready to bring Doom back, I had no problem picking him up from where Bill had left him.

SANDERSON: *Aren't you generally called for advice on that sort of thing?*

BYRNE: Yes, for the most part. I was 85 percent happy, which is as much as one can hope for.

SANDERSON: *Even on the* Hercules *mini-series?*

BYRNE: No, I was not consulted on that. At all But the Galactus thing in there I think is pretty much an imaginary story. I think that's Hercules bullshitting again. So I intend to pretty much treat it as such.

SANDERSON: *Do you wish you hadn't said that about killing Alicia and Franklin?*

BYRNE: No, not at all. It generated a phenomenal amount of response and every time I do a story with Franklin and Alicia now, everybody thinks they are dead. So, if nothing else, the kiddies are paying attention. So I generated a terrific amount of pre-publicity on the thing.

SANDERSON: *I thought for a moment you were going to say, "Oh, you shouldn't have printed that, Peter."*

BYRNE: Oh, no, no, no. That was great. Of course what the kids didn't get was the sort of context in which it was said. It wasn't "What do you want to do with these people?" "Oh, I want to kill them!" It was just in the sense of "I don't know what to do with them." Now I know what to do with them. In fact, I'm glad that I didn't kill either of them because they both presented much broader ranges of utilization than I ever thought.

SANDERSON: *What changed your mind about them?*

BYRNE: Just generally trying to get into Alicia's head. It really opened up the character for me, and when I started to put together the whole notion of her as the reason for Ben still being the Thing, that justified her whole existence for me. Because the real problem for me was that if the Thing had this beautiful albeit blind girlfriend, he really wasn't all that tragic. I wish I had a beautiful albeit blind girlfriend [*laughs*]. I wouldn't worry about whether or not I was lumpy and ugly. I'd just say, "Hey, I've got this beautiful blind girl who loves me." So it diminished the impact of the character. Now I think by making her the reason for him still being the Thing, I have put a big chunk of that tragedy of his existence back.

SANDERSON: *Do you think that what Ben thinks about Alicia loving*

the Thing but not him as a human has some truth to it, or is it just Ben's compulsive paranoia about it?

BYRNE: For myself, I think it's mostly Ben. I think there is just enough reaction from Alicia that Ben Grimm is not somebody that she is familiar with, in the same way that she is familiar with The Thing. That would sort of serve to fuel the flames in his mind. But the whole thing dates back to, what was it, Issue 9? The first appearance of the Puppet Master. When Ben Grimm is holding Alicia in his arms and changes back into The Thing, and she is relieved to discover that this is The Thing and not some stranger. I think that is really locked into Ben's mind.

SANDERSON: *Despite even the sequence in Liddleville in which a normal-looking Ben and Alicia were living as husband and wife?*

BYRNE: Oh, yes, definitely. Because that wasn't real. He can justify anything in his mind by saying that it wasn't real. Whatever Alicia's reactions to him were, they were manipulated by the Puppet Master, or they were engineered by Dr. Doom, not by how she really feels about him.

SANDERSON: *How about Franklin? When did you change your mind about him?*

BYRNE: Well, I have a deep-rooted loathing for super-heroes with children, and that was what really blocked me on Franklin. But in the process of getting *The Fantastic Four*, I also developed a family, as you are aware. *[Byrne's wife Andrea has two children from a previous marriage—P.S.]* And having a kid around gives one a different slant on how children are. "Wow, the aren't horrible little stunted monsters. By golly, they're people." So I was starting to think about Franklin in those terms and wondering what I could do with him. Getting rid of his powers opened up a whole vista of things that one now has to deal with. So now here's this kid, this perfectly normal child. What do we do with *him* in this context? And there's another 100 stories right there.

SANDERSON: *If the F.F. are ordinary people with super powers, ordinary people have children.*

BYRNE: Right. And of course,

Panels from Byrne's first few solo *Fantastic Four* issues

AND I'LL JUST BET IT'S ARTIFICIAL, AIN'T IT, HH?
SO, LET'S HAVE A LITTLE PEEK UNDER THAT ROBE, SHALL WE?
HEY!
I HAVE TO BE REAL CAREFUL HERE -- BY CONTROLLING THE EXACT TEMPERATURE AND EXTENT OF MY FLAME, I CAN BURN OFF HIS ROBE...
© 1984 Marvel Comics Group
AW, CRUMBS! WHAT A LOUSY TIME FER IT TO START RAININ'!
RAINING? WHAT ARE YOU TALKING ABOUT?
© 1984 Marvel Comics Group
AND ONE OF ITS MOST FAMOUS CLIENTS: SUSAN STORM RICHARDS, THE INVISIBLE GIRL...
SUZIE, BABY, THIS NEW CUT IS GONNA MAKE YOU LOOK TWENTY YEARS YOUNGER!
WONDERFUL, MILO. I'M SURE MY HUSBAND WILL LOVE BEING MARRIED TO A CHILD!
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Sue's getting pregnant again. That must demonstrate that my philosophy has changed somewhere along the line.

SANDERSON: *Have you got any ideas as to what is going to happen when the child is born? Is it going to be a boy or a girl? Super-powered or not? Or is this all going to be a mystery?*

BYRNE: Well, I didn't know what Quicksilver and Crystal's kid was going to be as far as gender until the page that I drew it. So I think I'm going to leave the next generation of Richards in the same context. I will let it happen when it happens. So I'll find out at the same time Reed does. As to super-powers and what-not, well, we didn't find out with Franklin for quite a while.

SANDERSON: *When Sue gets pregnant, will there again be a replacement for her on the team?*

BYRNE: No, we're not going to deal with that this time. The emphasis this time will be on how Sue reacts to being shuffled off to the sidelines, much against her own desires. And we're talking about the new, improved (also contains lanoline) Sue Richards who is running around the book these days. I don't want to have a situation where we just bring in Medusa or Crystal or Luke Cage. We'll figure out how we deal with the Fantastic Four and one-half.

SANDERSON: *It's interesting after all these years of new writers coming aboard the FF, and saying they were going to make Sue into a much more aggressive character and beef up her powers, and not doing it. Then you come along and say, "No, she's a homebody." and proceed to make her a more aggressive character and beef up her powers*

BYRNE: Actually, she's no more aggressive, she's just more sensible now. She's just doing things. Everybody has approached Sue with the idea that "Well, we have to scrap the character." And my approach to Sue is that we take the character and deal with her as she is. And all I did was give her a mind, which she never really had before. She'd always been this kind of vacuous character who depended entirely upon Reed to come up with things for her to do. So the first thing I did was to give her a memory so that if Reed ever said, "Sue, throw a force bubble over there." then, by golly, she would actually be able to remember that he'd said that, and the next time she needed to do that, she wouldn't need him to say it again. And then once I gave her a memory, I said she could actually have some imagination and come up with stuff on her own. And of course, the most revolutionary change, which is using her force shield as a mode of transportation, I engineered so that she discovered it accidentally.

SANDERSON: *And I was quite pleasantly surprised when in the last issue when Reed's gone, it's automatically decided that she's the leader in his absence.*

BYRNE: Oh yeah. That was very deliberate. Because we are talking here about what is essentially a family situation. And when the father figure is gone, the mother immediately takes control.

SANDERSON: *When you think of the FF as a family, it's very odd in that Ben is at once the uncle and the son. Do you think of him leaning more towards Reed's brother or Johnny's brother?*

BYRNE: I think that depends entirely upon who he's with at the time. I think that when they are all together he takes a more mature role automatically so that he becomes Reed's tough brother. But when he and Johnny are palling around he relates to Johnny almost on an equal level. Because there is, underneath this rocky exterior so to speak [*laughs*], there's this fun-loving guy. Ben Grimm who was a hot-headed test pilot crashing around doing all kinds of crazy stuff. And he's still there, locked up inside this monstrous body, but he's still there. And he is able to relate to Johnny almost on a one-to-one

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basis, when they are not beating one another to a pulp.

SANDERSON: *Do you think there's sort of a split in Sue's personality in that she still characterizes herself as basically wife and mother but is becoming much more active in the Fantastic Four?*

BYRNE: Well, because of the family manisfestation of the Fantastic Four, there is no difficulty in her being wife and mother and still take a major role as a member of the Fantastic Four, because your average wife and mother takes a major role in the family. I mean, let's paint a really pre-liberation type picture here, where Dad goes to work and Junior goes to school, and Mom stays home so Mom doesn't get too terribly involved with Dad's work or Junior's school, but when Dad and Junior and home, they are a unit and she is an equal, functioning part of that unit. So now we take that unit and turn them all into super-heroes. So now Dad's work and Junior's school/work and her work all become the same thing. In other words, being super-heroes. So it's merely an extension of that family module. One could compare it to acting families, where Mom is still wife and mother and she's also part of the troupe. We go off and we perform together so she functions as an equal in the work situation just as she functions as an equal in the home situation. And the same is true of Sue.

SANDERSON: *Do you feel that in the super-hero books that we see today, both the old ones that are still going and the new ones that are being created, that they are distortions of the kind of appeal that made Marvel what it once was?*

BYRNE: Well, the books today tend to be rather pale caricatures of the original Marvels, if that's what you mean

SANDERSON: *Let me put it another way. If the FF and Spider-Man were created to be ordinary people who do not look like gods, who have quarrels, and trouble paying the rent and things like that. And if they are basically like that and nowadays we see super teams coming out, what the new X-Men are, what the new Titans are, what the Legion has become, which seem to be much more in the glamorous mold.*

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"Sue isn't more aggressive, just more sensible."

BYRNE: Oh yes, these were super-heroes created to be super-heroes.

SANDERSON: *Now do you feel that this is...*

BYRNE: A Marvelizing of Marvel that has happened.

SANDERSON: *Why do you think this came about, and do you think there's a decline in general or that it works for some characters?*

BYRNE: Every once in a while there's a character for whom it works. It's obvious that Superman can never be anything but Superman. It's obvious that given his immediate background, Batman can never be anything but Batman, but I think it's unfortunate when we see characters whose native origins are forgotten and the super-hero comes to the fore. For example, in the case of Colossus, to speak of a character that I've dealt with on a first hand basis. Peter Rasputin is almost a total cipher. There are elements that are sort of tacked on, but they don't represent the real person because what we have is Colossus, who was then sort of bent sideways in order to create Peter Rasputin. But Colossus obviously came first. Now it's obvious that The Thing, The Torch, Mr. Fantastic and the Invisible Girl came first, but it seems to me that a lot more thought went into Ben Grimm, Johnny Storm, and Reed and Sue than ever went into Peter Rasputin or Kurt Wagner or any of those people because we have situations where the super-hero is created before the basic concept of who this guy is is created. That's what I mean when I say we have so many things today that are just pale caricatures of what Marvel really is. And that's what I am trying to get back to, very much, with the Fantastic Four, the sense that the stories happen to these people because of who they are, not because of what powers they have.

SANDERSON: *Why do you think that the Fantastic Four got turned more conventionally more super-heroic over the years? A process that started even during the Stan and Jack period.*

BYRNE: Oh, yeah, it's the Marvelization of Marvel. It's that sudden self-awareness that happens. It's like now that people are paying attention to us, we'd better do something "important." And as a result of that, the important elements are lost. It seems to me, and I've said this before, that no truly important comic story was ever done with the writer sitting down saying "I'm going to do an important story." Most of the time it sort of happened.

SANDERSON: *Well, if we look specifically at the Fantastic Four, at the same time that Lee and Kirby were no longer doing the Thing/Torch fights and things like that, and they were getting into the tight costumes and the Thing was getting cute, at the same time, we had what I consider some of the great* FF *stories come along, the Inhumans, the first Galactus story...*

BYRNE: Agreed. The period between, say, #FF 50 and #FF 70 are some of the best stories ever done,

...JEAN-PAUL BEAUBIER, OLYMPIC AND PROFESSIONAL SKI CHAMPION, ON A PROMOTIONAL TOUR IN JASPER NATIONAL PARK.
...DR. MICHAEL TWOYOUNGMEN, MD, STAFF PHYSICIAN AT THE SARCEE RESERVE HOSPITAL OUTSIDE CALGARY, ALBERTA.
...CORPORAL ANNE MCKENZIE, RCMP, RECORDS OFFICER, ASSIGNED TO YELLOWKNIFE, NORTHWEST TERRITORIES.
...DR. WALTER LANGKOWSKI, PH.D.--FORMER ALL-PRO LINEBACKER TURNED PROFESSOR OF BIO-PHYSICS AT MCGILL UNIVERSITY, MONTREAL
AND, FINALLY, JEANNE-MARIE BEAUBIER, A TEACHER IN LaVALLE, QUEBEC.
NORTHSTAR.
SHAMAN.
SNOW-BIRD.
SASQUATCH.
AURORA.
1984 Marvel Comics Group

The members of Alpha Flight, as introduced in *X-Men* #120. [Inks by Terry Austin.]

but I can't help but think, looking at them, that if we hadn't lost that element that was in, say, the first 20 issues, those stories would have been even better. It's not to say that those stories are diminished: it's just that they could have been better.

SANDERSON: And that your job is doing the FF *is to try to combine the two phases into one.*

BYRNE: That's the Herculean task I have set for myself. Whether or not I will ever succeed remains to be seen.

SANDERSON: *Marvel made its start on presenting heroes with problems, heroes with foibles, but you've also been quoted as saying that in some cases you see this going too far, and that there are overly alienated, overly neurotic heroes. At what point is the line crossed?*

BYRNE: I think the line is crossed at the point where the troubles become arbitrary. The troubles happen because the writer decided that it's time for Peter Parker to have terminal acne, instead of having it happen as part of a natural progression of events. This is one of the reasons that when I'm plotting *The Fantastic Four*, I plot their personal lives only in the most vague sense, so that I have a sort of general idea of where their personal lives are going for the next year. But I throw in the twists and turns on an issue-to-issue basis just so that it will be more like real life, in which we are not planning and we cannot say that this-this-this-and-this are going to happen. What I do instead is to say "What would happen if I do this?" and then I do that and I have to deal with it for the next half-dozen issues until I find out whether or not it's working, and if it isn't working I have to figure out a logical way for the hero to get out of it. If we just come along and say that he's going to have terminal acne, and that it will last four issues and he'll do this, then it becomes a soap-opera, then it becomes unreal. And I think that the early Marvels were very soap-opera-like, but there was always that vague sense of reality in there...

SANDERSON: *...of the problems and characterization growing out of the basic persona, rather than being imposed from above.*

BYRNE: Right. You can trace the problem to the first time that Aunt May had a heart attack for no particular reason. You can say that then it's getting arbitrary. "Well, Parker's life is going too easy, I think I'll have Aunt May have a heart attack."

SANDERSON: *Well, is it just the arbitrariness or are there certain particular kinds of characterization that you feel are wrong?*

BYRNE: Yeah. For the most part I think it's the instances where you can see manipulation of the character, where the character is stepping perhaps not out of character but stepping somewhat sideways from his character in order for something to happen to him, so that we can have more angst, more soap-opera. And this is the kind of thing that I'm trying very hard to avoid.

SANDERSON: *...or perhaps trendy stereotypes being substituted for characterization?*

BYRNE: Yeah, all of that stuff, where a character will develop a certain type of personality just because the writer feels like it at that moment. You ask why he does do it and he tells you that it works for that story. And if it doesn't seem right for that person, he makes it right from that point on. Instead, it

should be a logical outgrowth of this version. And this of course happens all the time.

SANDERSON: *In creating your own super-hero team, Alpha Flight, were you finding youself inspired by the characters from the early '60s? How do you feel that because this is now the early '80s that there are real problems in trying to recapture that kind of spirit and that inevitably new characters will come out like 80's teams?*

BYRNE: Well, Alpha Flight has presented a whole new set of problems for me. First and foremost is the fact that they were created as heroes. There was almost no background on these people when they first appeared in *The X-Men*, and anything that has come since has been added on. Therefore, my number one problem is to try to create whole full personalities for these people that won't look as if it was desperately tacking stuff on to the characters after they had originally been created as super-heroes. So that Superman will seem a logical outgrowth of Clark Kent, rather than the other way around.

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ABOVE: Marrina, one of the newest members of Alpha Flight, from her debut in the first issue

BELOW A character sketch of Sasquatch done in 1978

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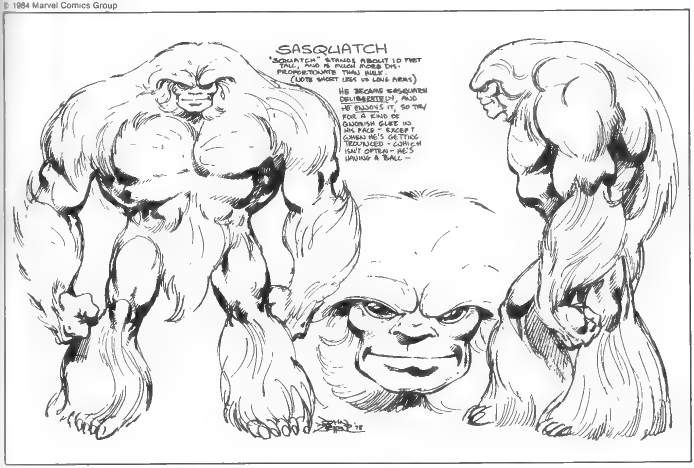

SASQUATCH
"SQUATCH" STANDS ABOUT 10 FEET TALL, AND IS MUCH MORE DYNAMIC/MUSCULATED THAN HULK.
(LOTS SHORT LINE IN LONG HAIR.)
HE BECAME SASQUATCH DELIBERATELY, AND HE ENJOYS IT, SO I'M FOR A KIND OF GLEEFUL GLEE TO HIS FACE, EXCEPT CAMERA IS GETTING TOO CLOSE - COMICH HALF OFTEN - HE'S HAVING A BALL. --

HERE IS THE SALAD YOU ORDERED, MAJESTY.
I HOPE IT IS TO YOUR LIKING...
AND PRAY YOU WILL NOT NOTICE IT IS ONE ONION SHORT!
AWRIGHT! SO FAR, SO GOOD! BUT WE AIN'T OUTTA TH' WOODS YET! IF WE'RE GONNA PULL OFF DIS ESCAPE WE'LL NEED SUPPLIES, WEAPON'S, MAPS O' DE AREA...
OF COURSE, SMALL ONE! BUT IN THE MORNING! IT IS LATE, AND WE SHOULD GET TO BED!
OH, SURE! I'M TRYIN' TA SAVE OUR NECKS AN' ALL YOU CAN THINK OF IS...
...BED?
OKAY, NOW, HERE'S THE PLAN...
Characters Marvel Comics Group

Another ultra-rare goodie: From John Byrne's 8-page story "Quorph" in *Chronicle* #5, 1975

The second problem is that I have absolutely nothing to fall back on in this instance. In the case of the Fantastic Four, I've got almost 25 years that I can draw on; I know who these people are, and who the villains are, and why they react the way they do. In the case of Alpha Flight, these guys are all ciphers. I have to create every moment in their lives from this moment on, make sure everybody acts the way they are supposed to, and decide what that "supposed to" is, and all this stuff. And it's just a really fascinating experience because it's just totally different from what I'm doing on the Fantastic Four. And, yes, they are going to be the heroes of the '80s, but I hope that will not be just guys flying around in fancy costumes punching out villains. I hope they will be real people like those that the '60s gave us, the early '60s, but in an '80s context.

SANDERSON: *So this sort of thing can still be achieved, although it is more difficult, perhaps.*

BYRNE: I think the major problem is that things are changing so rapidly nowadays as opposed to the way they were pre-1964, that it's hard for the characters not to get stereotypical. It's hard not to just seize on something that's happening now and say "Well, so and so is going to be a punker," only to wake up and find out that punk's dead. Then what would I do?

SANDERSON: *Looking at a picture of Alpha Flight, they do look like they are in a standard sleek glamorous mode. You don't see any who don't appear to fit the heroic mold as it's now defined. You see muscular characters, beautiful women, a monster who actually does look sort of friendly, and a short funny guy. So there's a certain familiarity about it.*

BYRNE: When I created three-fourths of Alpha Flight, I was in that period of my life, which I hope is now behind me. When I believed that super-heroes exist only to be super-heroes. They wear tight costumes and have bulging muscles. And because of that, I am more or less stuck with those visualizations, although I am fiddling with them a bit. Northstar has lost about 25 pounds from his first appearance. Shaman has grown substantially older since his first appearance.

What good is a book without a Dr. Who drawing?

Little things like this are starting to happen. And the introduction of Puck and Marrina is an attempt to create some sense of what I'm trying to do with the book now as opposed to what I would have done with it had it become a series four years ago.

SANDERSON: *Shifting back to the FF, it seems to me that some of your stories there have been intended to take the reader intellectually by surprise. I can give three examples in one issue where we find out in the end that the FF screwed up, something that you do not usually expect the FF to do, because they did not consider a possibility about the creature they were fighting.*

BYRNE: Yeah, I thought it was very necessary to have them goof their first step into the Negative Zone. That was the framing device for the whole Negative Zone sequence. As Reed says at the end of the story, "Nothing can be taken for what it appears to be." He says that, or variations of it, several times as a set-up. And then of course, the first thing that happens, everybody charges in assuming everything is the way they perceive it to be. Reed himself comments that he would probably have done the same thing if he hadn't been in a situation where he was forced to think about it.

SANDERSON: *Well, it seems to me that it goes beyond just the strategy of invading the Negative Zone. For example, in the Galactus story [#243-4] they've finally got Galactus on the ropes and they decide not to let him die, but to save his life. That turned out to be a*

controversial decision with the readers.

BYRNE: Yeah. [*laughs*] That's an example of doing an important story that you don't think is going to be important.

SANDERSON: *Then there is the story in which Doom regains the Latverian throne [#247]. The reader is forced to consider the possibility that Doom may actually be better for the Latverians than Zorba. This became very controversial because Doom says that it's because of Zorba and all his troublemakers that we no longer have peace and order and prosperity in Latveria; this is a typical totalitarian argument.*

BYRNE: Oh, it is very much a totalitarian argument.

SANDERSON: *And Reed is very reluctantly forced to accept it, at least to an extent. It seems to me that in both of these stories, the Galactus story and the Doom story, the reader is not being led by the hand and told what to think as he usually is in comics. He stands back and watches this very controversial or questionable decision being made and judges for himself without the author telling him what to think.*

BYRNE: Well, I'm doing what should be happening in all comics.

SANDERSON: *So obviously you've planned to do stories like this and you are not just doing entertainments. You feel you have serious themes in mind when you do The FF?*

BYRNE: Well, I hope it's entertaining [*laughs*].

SANDERSON: *But, not just entertainment.*

BYRNE: Right. The serious themes grow out of the stories themselves.

SANDERSON: *And again, are not imposed from above.*

BYRNE: Exactly, it's that point that I've made before. The Galactus story and the Doom story are the two most "important" stories that I've done, but neither of them struck me as especially important when I did them. They seemed like perfectly logical stories. I couldn't allow Galactus to die, and Doom has demonstrated repeatedly in the past that his is the best form of government in Latveria. *Only* for Latveria. We're not talking about a microcosm of the world here. And so I did what I perceive as a perfectly logical story and expected everyone to write in and go "Oh, yeah." Instead, I got "Byrne! You fascist!" and of course an awful lot of letters like "Why did Phoenix have to die if Galactus doesn't?"

SANDERSON: *Which you dealt with in the letter column.*

BYRNE: And which we'll be dealing with even further in future stories.

SANDERSON: *One of the justifications you gave in the letters page was that Galactus does what he must to survive. However, Phoenix killed herself rather than continue to commit her depredations....*

BYRNE: Fine quibble there. Jean Gray killed herself in order to prevent the total resurrection of Phoenix.

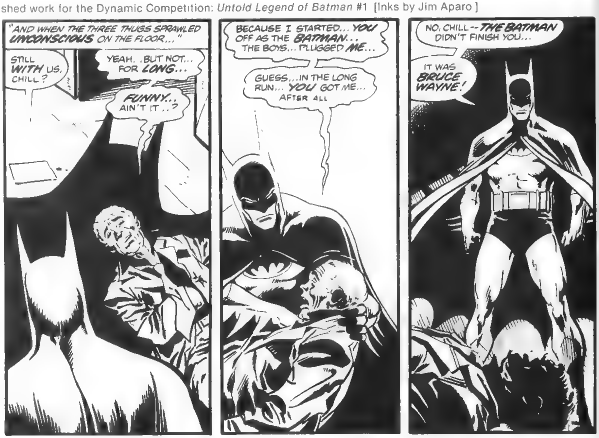
SANDERSON: *Okay, if we treat them as separate beings.*

BYRNE: Which I do.

SANDERSON: *Are we then justified in saying that Galactus should not be condemned because he's doing what he must to survive? Is it not really morally incumbent for him to commit suicide? Or for people to destroy him?*

BYRNE: Well, one of the things I will be establishing, I hope, or re-establishing in the next Galactus story, is the importance of Galactus.

Byrne's first published work for the Dynamic Competition: *Untold Legend of Batman* #1 [Inks by Jim Aparo]


"AND WHEN THE THREE THUGS SPRAWLED UNCONSCIOUS ON THE FLOOR..."
STILL WITH US, CHILL?
YEAH...BUT NOT... FOR LONG...
FUNNY... AIN'T IT...?
BECAUSE I STARTED... YOU OFF AS THE BATMAN... THE BOYS... PLUGGED ME...
GUESS...IN THE LONG RUN... YOU GOT ME... AFTER ALL
NO, CHILL -- THE BATMAN DIDN'T FINISH YOU...
IT WAS BRUCE WAYNE!
1980 DC Comics, Inc.

AN INSTANT OF ETERNITY IS LOCKED FOREVER INTO THE MIND OF BENJAMIN GRIMM.
..AS SLOWLY--UNSTEADILY--HE RISES TO FACE..
...HIMSELF!
1984 Marvel Comics Group

From *Marvel Two-in-One* #50, the current Thing meets his older, uglier more mud-like self. [Inks by Joe Sinnott.]

that for him to destroy himself over what he does would be the equivalent of me destroying myself after eating a salad. We are talking about a being who is so vastly superior to us that we can't even relate to what he is. I'm going to be overpublishing, for example, that Galactus doesn't really look like that. That's really the best our human minds can do in perceiving Galactus. I'm going to do a sequence in which many different alien races are seen to be confronting Galactus simultaneously and we get a brief glimpse of how each of those races perceives Galactus, and it is different in each case. They each see him in some horrendous version of their own form, whatever that may be, humanoid or not, which is how we see Galactus. But he is in fact a being so far above us, that we are only just barely aware of what he is. Mark Gruenwald is doing the origin of Galactus for *Super Villain Classics*. He is taking all the bits and pieces of the origin of Galactus and editing them into a consecutive order. I contributed some bits of dialogue and some suggestions in order to establish just how important Galactus is to the frame of things. So compared to Galactus, Phoenix is nothing. And we are less than nothing.

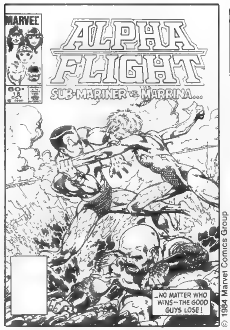
SANDERSON: *On the other hand, there is this tremendous guilt that Galactus feels that Dr. Strange forced him to confront [#243].*

BYRNE: Ordinarily, Galactus doesn't actually feel it. It's totally put aside. Basically what Strange did was to bring it out, which is why it had the traumatic effect it did on Galactus, because this is something he is not used to confronting. If it was a guilt that he confronted constantly, and dealt with, then Strange would not have been able to do that.

SANDERSON: *His dialogue earlier in that story indicated that he was aware that this guilt was somewhere in the back of his mind. If he even dared look at it, he said that he would collapse.*

BYRNE: Yeah, because he is doing something that would tend to prey on your mind. Galactus is aware of how important he is in the frame of things. But nevertheless he cannot avoid the fact that every once in a while [he kills billions of people. He does so] inadvertently by the way, because he doesn't deliberately kill people. He doesn't go out and drain the life-force out of people. The salad analogy I used earlier is very apt because when you eat a salad, you destroy billions of bacteria that live on that salad. So when Galactus eats a planet, he destroys the life forms that live on that planet. But his intent is not to destroy the life forms.

SANDERSON: *But Galactus recalls that he was once a human-like mortal himself. The fact that he's aware that he has this repressed guilt somewhere in his mind indicates that he know that human beings are somewhat more important than bacteria. So in part he doesn't regard himself as totally separate and above humanity, however often he might tell himself the*



opposite, but sees himself as very closely linked to them.

BYRNE: Well, not closely, but linked. But this is one of the things that we are going to be tying down in future Galactus stories. He is aware that this is a terrible thing he is doing, on one level. But he is also aware that his total purpose in the ultimate context of the universe is so far above this that it reduces the terribleness of what he's doing to sort of a nagging guilt. And it's only the magnitude of it that turns it into a guilt that's really formidable.

SANDERSON: *And he does have a purpose? He doesn't just exist to go around eating?*

BYRNE: This is one of the lines that Gruenwald has injected into the revised origin of Galactus: that he is aware that it is his purpose to return to the universe more than he takes out. So this is what Galactus does. He is aware that he must do this at some point. I'm planning in my *Galactus* Graphic Novel to have at least one sequence in which the Watcher or somebody discusses the eventual death of Galactus and comments that on the day that Galactus eventually dies, a universe shall mourn. We will re-emphasize that this guy is real important in the whole cosmic scope of things.

SANDERSON: *If we take the Phoenix analogy again, we could say the X-Men had assumed wrongfully, as it turned out, that there was at least a good chance of Jean not reverting to Dark Phoenix when they decided to fight for her. Whereas the FF and the Avengers revive Galactus fully aware that they might get him to promise to leave Earth alone but not other planets. Do you think this makes a difference?*

BYRNE: Very much so. And the difference lies in the fact that the Avengers and FF at least, these heroes who have confronted Galactus in the past, are reluctantly but definitely aware of who and what he is and aware of how truly insignificant they really are. They can fight to protect themselves and do everything in their power to try to prevent Galactus from destroying their world. But at the bottom line, they have to acknowledge that he is more important than they are and that they do not have the right to allow him to die. That's the difference, that's what makes the hero. They can fight, and in the process of the battle, possibly kill Galactus, but standing around and allowing him to die is a whole different set of problems morally speaking. And that's something they simply could not deal with. They could not just stand there and let him die because that was not their choice to make.

SANDERSON: *As for the Latveria story, there's the argument that Doom might indeed be the better*

ruler for the Latverians, but when you take the whole world into consideration, it would be wrong to dethrone Zorba and give Doom back such an important power base.

BYRNE: Well, that's when you get into global politics and have to ask yourself whether Doom really presented that much of a threat to the world at large. He has never, at least in my memory, attacked the world at large. Obviously his intent is to rule the world, but we have no clear indication of how he intends to do that. It's obvious from his actions in the past that he has no inclination to declare war on the rest of the world.

SANDERSON: *He did attack the whole world when he had the Silver Surfer's cosmic power* [Fantastic Four *#57-60*].

BYRNE: But he was also crazy by my definition. That was an example of absolute power. And that was also one man declaring war on the world as opposed to a ruler of a nation declaring war on the world. We have no idea, because of the outcome of that story, what would have happened if Doom had in fact won in that situation. In fact, that is something that might be worth investigating, somewhere along the line: what would have happened if he had won. I am going to be getting back into how we mere mortals deal with cosmic power. I think Doom very much was driven

insane by [having so much power in that story] because he was doing very non-Doom-like things.

SANDERSON: *He didn't use the power to fix his face.*

BYRNE: Right. Exactly. He was also showing off, which I don't perceive Doom as doing. Causing mountains to appear under sailboats and things like that. It just struck me as very non-Doom-like. Which tends to suggest that the ultimate high of the cosmic power had pushed him over the edge. Reed in effect did him a big favor when he sucked the power out of him because it gave him his mind back.

SANDERSON: *I suppose that this even affects Galactus in a way. It gives him a mind that is on a higher plane than most people's.*

BYRNE: Yeah, it is. His whole physical being is on a higher plane. We're talking one step down from God.

SANDERSON: *There is another theme that appears to be cropping up in* The FF*: take the man with the power, the man capable of performing miracles but who does not intentionally do them [#234]. The point was that he can change his life if he wants to. The people in "Wendy's Friends" [#239] who confront the demons: some of them can survive the confrontation and some of them can't. The fact is that in the nightmare story it isn't superpowers that break the spell, it's Reed's love for Sue. And again the* What If? *in which the FF beat the Mole Man without having any superpowers at all. You seem to think that there is a potential for heroism in any human spirit that is defined as fulfilling one's potential, rather than saving the world or something like that.*

BYRNE: Well, in a lot of people, perhaps not. Obviously not the ones who died or fled from the demons. I think it dates back to when I was about 13 or 14 and I read "Invictus." I don't know if you're familiar with the poem but the line "I am the captain of my fate, I am the master of my soul" stuck with me for years after that. It's still with me as a kind of constant reminder that whatever we have in our life is what we've made of it. And when we start dealing with super-heroes, with cosmic events, it's still the same. And Skip Collins was sort of

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The death of Guardian, from *Alpha Flight* #12

the ultimate personification of that. This incredible power and all he does with it is to make his life as mediocre as he possibly can. That's what we all do. And we are all confronted with the good and evil sides of ourselves. It's morality plays, but it's kind of a cynic's eye view of how people are.

SANDERSON: *Do you find any contradiction in being a cynic toward human behavior, but neuertheless doing stories about heroism?*

BYRNE: I suppose that there's no such thing as a cynic, is there? What we really have is disillusioned romanticism. And that's what I am. I like to look for the good in people but I don't see it very often. For every Schweitzer there's a Hitler. And for every Schweitzer there's somebody proving that Schweitzer wasn't quite everything he seemed to be. I think basically mankind is rotten but every once in a while we achieve things that almost balance that.

SANDERSON: *Since you do believe in doing serious themes in comics, do you think there are limits to the depth of seriousness that you can achieve inherent in the genre or in the expectations of the mass audience—what will sell and what won't—or do you think it depends just on the talents of the individual writer or artist?*

BYRNE: I think the only limitation is one of time. And that is, in fact, if I do a major trauma, a really serious thing. Take something really arbitrary. Say I kill Reed. This would have to be the single most significant event in the lives of most of these people in this book. The death of Reed Richards would probably utterly decimate Sue, even in her new improved form, would certainly tear up Ben, and would have untold effects on Johnny. And it would probably affect them for the rest of their lives. But in the context of the comic, these people aren't aging. And so for them to be continually agonizing about Reed's death would become silly after a while, and very confusing to new readers. So within that context, we are somewhat limited by the seriousness of what we can do because we cannot fully explore the seriousness of it. Because if *The Fantastic Four* lasts for another 50 years, the readers will have forgotten Reed's death. Forgotten Reed. And to have the characters reacting quite normally to his death would seem quite abnormal.

SANDERSON: *So then, in a sense, it's easier to do this kind of story with supporting characters who aren't going to be there the whole time.*

BYRNE: We can still do the

The Sub-Mariner, from *Fantastic Four* #260

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important stuff. We can still kill Phoenix, for example. But what we then have to do is what in the real world would be very artificial, and that would be to very quickly forget all about Phoenix. We'd have to have six months to a year of the X-Men going "Oh, Jean is dead, what a terrible thing." But, then, eventually, the references to Phoenix, the references to Jean, the references to the person dying have to diminish, until we forget that character ever was. Because otherwise we are having new kids coming in on roughly a five year cycle and going "Well, who's this Phoenix person?"

SANDERSON: *On the other hand, what if we don't talk about characters who disappear? Reed and Sue are always going to be in* The FF, *so there you could do something that was very long range, presumably, with the subject of the ongoing story of a marriage*

BYRNE: Yeah. You don't have to read the last 25 issues to understand that Reed and Sue are married. But if I did kill Reed and 25 issues later still had Sue reacting as if it were yesterday, there would be a need to go back and say, "Well, who was this Reed Richards guy? And why is she doing this, and why did he die?" If Spider-Man were still carrying on about Gwen Stacy, it would be perfectly logical for him because it would only be a couple of years, Spider-Man time, but for us it's been what, 10 years? Which is depressing in itself.

SANDERSON: *One question that I've been specifically asked by people to ask you is about the aging question of the FF. I've already been reading things in fanzines about how dare John Byrne declare that* Sgt. Fury *#3 never happened [which guest stars Reed Richards] and that Reed wasn't there during World War II. I understand that you think of Reed as being 42 and Ben as being 38. I was surprised at the four year difference.*

BYRNE: Well I figure that Reed was on about his fifth college when they met. Which I establish in *The Thing* #1.

SANDERSON: *And Sue's 29 and Johnny's 23.*

BYRNE: Yeah. And if I do the book for 10 years, they will still be those ages.

SANDERSON: *Just for the benefit of those people who don't understand why characters don't have to freeze in time, why do they have to? Why can't we still keep Superman meeting President Kennedy?*

BYRNE: Well, the heroes, because of the way they're structured, could probably be excused from aging. So we can say that Reed and Sue and Johnny and Ben and Peter Parker

John Byrne meets George Lucas in this scene from *Indiana Jones* #1 [Inks by Terry Austin]

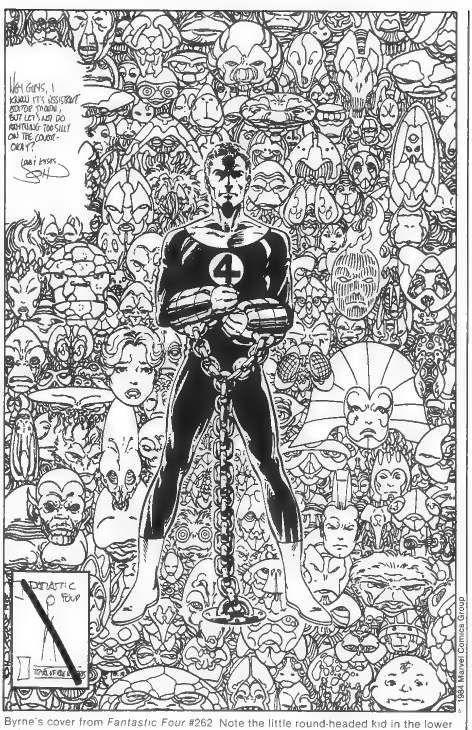
1984 Lucasfilms Inc.

and everybody else you want to mention have all [been given superpowers] and Superman is for all we know, immortal. So you could say that these people aren't aging, and therefore it doesn't matter that they meet [many different] Presidents and clothing styles change. But we also have a supporting cast, and it's really in my mind, anyway, for the supporting cast that time has to freeze. For example, Alicia has been in the book for 20 years If she was 19 when she first appeared, that would make her 39 or 40 now and in another 10 years she'd be 50 and we'd be getting into a whole different set of things to deal with. She's going to be older than Ben. What do we do? And unless we are prepared to have a situation in which all the non-heroes, all the non-special people, are constantly having a turnover, then we have to freeze time And if we don't freeze time, we are also confronted with people like Batman, who could be as good as Jack LaLanne, and still be in terrific shape, but you'd have to deal with the fact [that he has grown old]. This is for me the reason that Earth-2 doesn't work any more for me, because those guys froze the first moment we encountered them. So we have no real indication that when he died the Batman of Earth-2 was probably in his 70s or at least his late 60s.

SANDERSON: *And still running around in costume.*

BYRNE: Yeah, so it doesn't trouble me that these people age. And the funny thing is that the same people who are prepared to lynch me because I said *Sgt. Fury* #3 never happened and that Ben and Reed were never in the war, are not at all troubled by the fact that Franklin has been around for 14 years and is still only five. That doesn't seem to bother them. So there's kind of a double standard working there.

SANDERSON: *And there are other problems too that I've been thinking of lately that come about if comic book time is made equivalent to real time. For example, it's much easier for me to accept a Superman/Lois Lane unconsummated relationship that's been going on for say seven, eight years than one that's been going on for 40. Or for that matter, if we say that Robin really has been around since 1940, but has not yet aged, does that mean he spent 30 years in high school? If you accept the idea of these characters not aging but actually living through all these decades, even if you accept the idea that the entire fictional Earth has people who live for decades without aging, you have to take into account all these cultural changes that would necessarily result*


HIGH GUYS, I KNOW IT'S DESSERT BEFORE THEN, BUT LET'S ADD DO ANYTHING TO SULLY OUR TIDE COURT-ORDER?
LOVE HUGS
SUE!
FANTASTIC FOUR
TOMORROW
© 1984 Marvel Comics Group

Byrne's cover from *Fantastic Four* #262 Note the little round-headed kid in the lower right hand corner

BYRNE: Yeah, and comic books have this built in telescoping of time. If you take the last 22 years of *The Fantastic Four* and read them all in one sitting, you will find that they don't cover 22 years. The first Galactus trilogy takes place in an afternoon. "My" Galactus trilogy, he said pretentiously, covers five days, only because I arbitrarily inserted a five-day period during which Johnny was missing. That could have been a day and a half or an

Galactus. [Pencilled page from *Silver Surfer Special Edition* #1.]

four and a half, but I decided quite arbitrarily to make it five days. As I've said many times, Franklin is five years old, and if I stay on the book for ten years, in my last issue, he'll start school. However, I want the seasonal changes that are going on around us to match the book a little more closely, because I like at least that much real time to intrude on the books. When the kids are reading the comic in the middle of winter, the comic is in the middle of winter, and when it's the middle of summer, it's the middle of summer.

SANDERSON: *So when we re-read these old stories, we have to edit out in our minds that they have winter every year and that the FF was around when the Beatles were first becoming popular.*

BYRNE: Sure, exactly. As Roger Stern has mentioned, he's going to be writing an article for *Marvel Age* called "Flash Thompson was never in Viet-Nam," because Viet-Nam was over before Peter Parker became Spider-Man.

SANDERSON: *As horrifying as this seems to us.*

BYRNE: Yes, but I think it's important for the new kids. Us long-time fans have just got to accept it and say well, that's the way it is. It's either that, or Earth-2 for Marvel, and I don't think any of us want to see that happen.

SANDERSON: *Not at all. But now something that may be a bit more troublesome than just keeping the characters the same age is that you can say that the FF were not formed in 1961 any more, but you do have characters who were created in specific periods, reflecting the attitudes of these periods. By the way, have you heard my theory about the true origin of the Fantastic Four?*

BYRNE: No.

SANDERSON: *Okay, this is a result of doing research at DC. There was once a group of adventurers, a professorial leading man, his girlfriend, his girlfriend's younger brother, and his strong-man/best friend, and they wanted to be comic book characters so first they went to DC to work, and people at DC put them in a time machine and they became Rip Hunter, Time Master and crew. This didn't work out, so they put them all in skin diving suits and they became Sea Devils, then they went underground and became Cave Carson and Company...*

BYRNE: That's what happened when I did the *What If?*

SANDERSON: *Oh, that was the Challengers of the Unknown...*

BYRNE: It started out to be the Challengers, but it turned into Cave Carson.

SANDERSON: *Yeah, and finally, they got sick of DC, signed up with this new company, got shot into outer space, and became the FF. [general laughter] Now why it's always the same configuration, I have no idea, but there must be something about the '50s and early '60s that had everyone thinking the same way.*

BYRNE: Well it goes back to pulps, really, doesn't it? There was always the professor and the professor's beautiful daughter/girlfriend, and if she was the daughter, then there was her big hunky boyfriend. And all that middle period really did was to take the hunky boyfriend and put the good looks on one person and the hunk on another person, so you ended up with four instead of three.

SANDERSON: *And I suppose that the kid brother is a modification of the kid side-kick?*

BYRNE: Sure.

SANDERSON: *But anyway, with the FF you have characters who are at least in two cases very much rooted in the attitudes of the time when they were created. Sue is in certain ways a pre-liberation woman, although she is changing with the times. And then, and this is something that you brought back and emphasized, in the "Liddleville" story [#236], Ben thought that his relationship with Alicia, when they thought they were married, had turned into something dirty, because it turned out they weren't really married. Do you think that newer readers will perceive these attitudes as dated in some way? Or are they still so widespread that people will accept them? Attitudes that the audience themselves could hold in the '80s?*

BYRNE: I don't know if those attitudes would be viewed as particularly widespread but I think there will always be people who have a very strict moral code. And how that moral code manifests itself will obviously be adapted by society so that if everybody is living together without benefit of church or state, then that will be the acceptable norm, and it won't trouble anybody. That will become the moral thing to do. Within our present context, I perceive Ben Grimm as an enormously straight-laced guy. Even more than Reed. Reed is kind of dull, but he's not horrendously straight-laced.

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SANDERSON: *Your Reed is even sort of passionate.*

BYRNE: Oh yeah. Reed has his little quirks [*laughs*] every once in a while. He can be distracted from the test-tube. But Ben is very straightforward, and very much that sort of John Wayne type hero who will marry the girl at the end. And, as the Thing, he cannot marry the girl. So to be put into a situation [in *FF* #236] where a marriage between himself and Alicia exists and then turns out not to be real, he has violated what he perceives as a most sacred trust. And you don't do that if you have Ben's very straight-

IN CHARGE OF CROWD CONTROL, MEGA-CITY ONE'S TOP LAWMAN, JUDGE DREDD –
CATCH WAGONS FILLING UP, DREDD. I'VE GOT THE RESERVE FLEET ON STAND-BY.
CAUGHT THESE TWO ORONGOS TRYING TO SMUGGLE IN A LASER CANNON!
ASKEY
STRIP-SEARCH 'EM AND BOOK 'EM!
© 1984 IPC Magazines

John Byrne meets Judge Dredd in this panel from 1983's *2,000 A.D. Special*

laced upbringing. I don't know what his ancestry is, but I'm thinking maybe Irish-Catholic or something.

SANDERSON: *Do you see yourself as someone who innovates in comics, or somebody who more or less consolidates what has gone on before?*

BYRNE: How about innovation through consolidation?

SANDERSON: *All right, if you can define it.*

BYRNE: Well...

SANDERSON: *The most spectacular innovation, I suppose, is the cinemascope issue.*

BYRNE: Well, that's not terrifically innovative. It's been done at least twice before that I'm aware of. And by a very unfortunate coincidence, *Cerebus the Aardvark* has done it, too.

SANDERSON: *But even so, it's fairly unusual for Marvel.*

BYRNE: It's unusual to do, but it's not particularly innovative. What I'm trying to do is to take all the good bits and pieces from the past, and hammer them together so that they can override what I perceive to be the dumb stuff that's been done in the recent past. If we can just go up to 1969 and then jump up to 1980, as far as the FF are concerned, take all that stuff, consolidate it, and then innovate from that point. So it's an awareness of history, but a striving for newness as well.

SANDERSON: *Are there particular directions that you can see yourself going in that would be considered innovative?*

BYRNE: Nothing that I can really tie down. What I'm attempting to do, and attempted to do during my first two years on *The FF*, is to take the oldest most hackneyed cliches that I can concoct or think of and sort of go 180 degrees from them. That's what most of the 20th anniversary issue [*#236*] was about. A number of people complimented me on how I danced right up to half a dozen Marvel cliches and then took off in another direction. I hope I will continue to be able to do that. To take the old story and then twist it so that it wasn't like the last time, or the time before, or even the time before that.

SANDERSON: *When you finally revealed Aunt Petunia [FF #239], what was the reaction from the fans? Did they feel that you had finally capped a long-time running joke, or did they wish they had never seen her?*

BYRNE: Well, the letter column that I did on that issue more or less reflected what happened. I got about 30 or 40 letters then and about a half-dozen thought it was a really stupid idea and wished I hadn't done it. But for the most part, they thought it was really terrific. And most of the people were genuinely surprised and pleased that they were surprised that it didn't turn out to be just another Aunt May or Agatha Harkness.

SANDERSON: *Does Aunt Petunia have the potential for coming back, or is this joke being written off as something from the past?*

BYRNE: Well, he's made a couple of Aunt Petunia references since that story, if I recall correctly. He made at least one reference to Petunia Grimm's favorite nephew. Uncle Jake is returning in the second issue of *The Thing*. This is all tied in with Alicia and Franklin getting better after being stepped on by Annihilus. Naturally, they call in the best doctor they know, and that of course is Jacob Grimm. So he's coming back and whether or not Petunia is coming back or not, I

don't know. I almost have a feeling that if she comes back it almost destroys that whole point of me having shown what she looked like. If she continues to reoccur, then she is no longer special. As I say, I have the next 13 issues of the FF plotted and I have no plans within those issues for her to come back. So it's really a wait-and-see situation.

SANDERSON: *When you tie up an old mystery like that, do you approach it with a lot of trepidation, and ask a lot of people for advice, or does it depend on the seriousness of the mystery?*

BYRNE: In a situation like that, it seemed like such an outlandish thing to do, such an illogical development, to have Aunt Petunia turn out to be such a beautiful young woman, that as soon as I thought of it, several years ago, long before I was ever doing *The FF*, I couldn't resist it. And when I had the opportunity, I went to Jim Salicrup [then editor of the FF] and said I wanted to do it, and he said fine, and I guess there was a momentary beat when Stan found out I was doing it. Because of course he immediately assumed that I was going to do the great dumb thing and have her turn out to be another Aunt May. And he wanted it stopped until he actually found out what I was doing, and then he said full speed ahead. And that was the issue I got a fan letter from Stan about.

SANDERSON: *Do you enjoy writing, but not drawing* The Thing *or* Two-In-One*?*

BYRNE: So far.

SANDERSON: *I read a lot of your interviews and I remember your saying a long time ago that you wanted to write a book that you did not also have to draw, but you didn't really explain why.*

BYRNE: Just to see if I could do it. Nothing more than that. Just spreading my wings, testing them. I have done just about everything in comics this side of stapling, but I've not extensively written something I did not draw. I wrote the *Hulk Annual* that Roger Stern mostly plotted and Sal Buscema drew. And Sal is one of the easiest artists in the world to write over. He gives you everything you ask for, so clearly and beautifully that it's not even an exercise in writing, it's just an exercise in paying attention to the pictures. So to work with an artist whose work I like and whose work is different enough from mine...In fact,that was one of the first things that Ron [Wilson] and I spoke about as writer and artist for the first time. He seemed slightly concerned that I was going to expect him to draw like me, and one of the first things I said was no, if I had wanted it to look as if I drew it, I would have done it myself. It's important to me that it come out looking different from the way I would have done it, so that I can test this supposed writing ability of mine Because writing your own stuff is easy: you know exactly what's going on, what exactly is going to be said. Writing what somebody else draws is intriguing, and that's the major tantalization for me.

Another panel from the 14-page story.

SANDERSON: *To see what this person brings to a story that you hadn't conceived of.*

BYRNE: Yeah.

SANDERSON: *Another mystery from other interviews is that you say that real comics are the ones on the bad paper, but you also say that you would like to do something like an Epic comic, or one of the Baxter paper alternative comics.*

BYRNE: Oh, sure.

SANDERSON: *What kind of material would you do for them that you would not do for the regular comics?*

BYRNE: That's hard to say since I have no specific projects in mind right now. I really have no idea what I would do. I think there's a popular misconception, from what I've said, that I don't like the new stuff, the Baxter paper, the Mando paper, or *Marvel Fanfare*, whereas in fact, I love these things. I think it's great that experimentation is being done. And if it all changes into a superior package, as *Marvel Fanfare* obviously is, I will rejoice, I will shout from the rooftops. But I will also mourn the passing of something that was very important to my youth. It was that bad paper and crummy printing that made the comics what they were. It's like silent movies, they eventually went away. And with them went something special.

SANDERSON: *And not just in terms of nostalgia either.*

BYRNE: There was something about silent movies that is just not there any more. What that is, is

hard to tie down but something went away when sound came in. And something will go away when we get great printing and brilliant color and terrific paper.

SANDERSON: *Although perhaps it's indefinable.*

BYRNE: Oh, I'm sure of that.

SANDERSON: *Here you've gone within the space of less than a decade, from being just a normal average fan to being a fan writer and artist, to being a Charlton and Marvel professional, to being this lionized figure at conventions, star of every issue of the* Comics Journal, *top selling fan favorite...*

BYRNE: Next step, dwindling non-entity [*laughs*]...

SANDERSON: *No, because you are still doing as well as ever. I see the crowds that attend your appearances at conventions. So I was wondering if this sort of thing is easy to adjust to. Does it seem as all this has happened over a long period of time, or does it seem to have taken place very rapidly?*

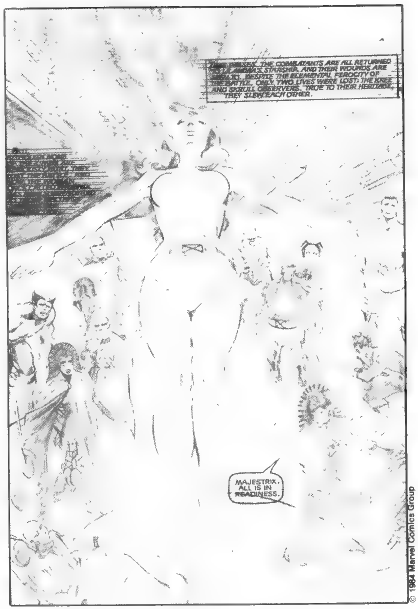
BYRNE: It seems to go in quantum leaps.

SANDERSON: *Then there is another aspect to fame in comics: say you attend a convention and you've gotten all these people who are hanging on your every word, applauding, asking for autographs, but then you leave the convention confines, and according to the excerpts from that radio interview that were in* The Buyer's Guide, *you find yourself telling people at parties that you're a gynecologist so that they won't laugh at your being a cartoonist.*

BYRNE: It's not so that they won't laugh, it's so that I won't have to do a 20-minute sermon on what I do for a living. Nobody understands it. If I say I'm a gynecologist, people don't ask for a detailed description You say cartoonist, and they go "What?"

SANDERSON: *Well, that's close to my point which is that working in comics is sort of met with incomprehension in the normal world or general public. This contrast must be strange for you.*

BYRNE: What can I say? I mean a quarter of a million people buy my comics in theory, which means that there are a quarter of a million kiddies out there who know my name and can point to my stuff and say John Byrne did this. And yet most of those people would not recognize me if I walked into a room. So it's not like being Robert Redford. I don't have to worry about being mobbed when I walk into a supermarket. Nobody knows who I am. I have twice been recognized on the street, which is the strangest experience I think I've ever had. Once I was driving down the street, and a guy pulled up in his car next to me and rolled down his window and yelled "Hey Mr. Byrne, I love what you're doing on *The FF*" and then drove off. And that was just utterly unnerving because that doesn't happen to cartoonists. But it has seemed, if I can go back to your original question, that the developments have come in leaps and bounds. I developed a core of followers when I was doing *Doomsday + 1* and *Space: 1999*. There were six people who loved my stuff. And those six people followed me to *Iron Fist*, and became 12 people, and those 12 people followed me to *The X-Men* and became 12 *thousand* people, instantly. It was very unnerving, because I was not aware of any major improvement in my work. Both Terry [Austin] and I were sort of feeling our way along at that point, trying to figure out what was going on. So there's nothing enormously spectacular about those early issues of *The X-Men*, but everyone caught on instantly. So that within six months of me starting on *The X-Men*, the "Bring back


THUS, THROUGH THE COMBATANTS ARE ALL RETURNED TO THEIR NORMAL STATURES, AND THEIR WOUNDS ARE HEALED, DESPITE THE BLEMISHFUL FEROCITY OF THE BATTLE, ONLY TWO LIVES WERE LOST: THE NOBLE AND DEVOUT OBSERVERS, TRUE TO THEIR HEREDITY, THEY SLEW EACH OTHER.
MAJESTRIX, ALL IS IN READINESS.
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From the famous aborted sequence in *X-Men* #137. These pages were eventually inked and used in *Phoenix: The Untold Story*.

[Dave] Cockrum" letters were gone, which is unfortunate, because I respect Dave's talent enormously. But that's what happened and once again, that leap has occurred so that people are accepting me as a writer. It's difficult for me to know whether or not I'm doing something right or if it just means that the lionization of John Byrne has carried over to his writing, so if John Byrne can do nothing wrong as an artist, it therefore stands to reason that he can do nothing wrong as a writer. The only letters I get these days are from fans who are obviously going through the same phases I went through as a fan. I would say that Neal Adams was the greatest thing that ever lived, and then I would get to a point with Neal's stuff where I would say that this was bad, simply because it was Neal. And now I'm getting that same kind of thing directed at me. "This is bad because it is Byrne." So it's impossible to judge whether I'm doing anything right or wrong or what. And that's kind of spooky.

Well, the most graphic example for me, that really shook me up, was at my first Chicago convention [1979], where I was on an artists panel, with Joe Kubert. And they introduced all these stars and everybody applauded politely, and they introduced me and the whole room went nuts. And I thought "This is wrong." That was my first reaction. That there was something wrong because I'm only John Byrne. And these people were ignoring Joe Kubert and applauding me. Another example was this past New York convention [Thanksgiving '82]. I came in on the end of Billy Mumy's panel and was sitting listening to some of the stuff he said. I started up toward the stage when he was finished, and Adam Malin announced to the crowd that John Byrne would be coming next and Billy Mumy said " "Boy, I want to meet him." And I thought "Wow, a movie star wants to meet me!" It was very funny. It was very strange to have that sort of situation occur. So we both stood there, shaking each other's hands, being impressed by each other.

SANDERSON: *So does this mean that it's really hard to get an objective response to your work?*

BYRNE: Yeah, it's so artificial in many ways, because I can walk into the supermarket and not be recognized. And because my wife's circle of friends who are all actors and actresses, are impressed by other things. My joke is that since marrying my wife, I've met everybody's brother and everybody's sister. I met John Travolta's sister [for example]. But their perceptions of what is and isn't important are enough to keep me humble. And friends who have known me since [before my days as a comics professional] when, who are not particularly impressed by what I do. It helps to remind me that what I'm doing is not as important as the fans would like to make it.

TBIB Marvel Comics Group

SANDERSON: *And this may even be an advantage to being a comics professional who's always lived outside the New York and California areas.*

BYRNE: Oh, very much so. It kept me away from the craziness and the paranoia for one thing. I would probably have had a nervous breakdown years ago if I'd been in New York, just from all that insanity from the late '60s and early '70s.

SANDERSON: *So where do you think you stand in your development right now as a writer and artist?*

BYRNE: Well, for the most part I think I'm a better writer than artist. But that's mostly because I tend to think of myself as a writer who draws, not as an artist who writes. Things are happening in my artwork right now that I'm enjoying [and I'm] feeling comfortable for the first time with a much larger percentage of my work I've always said that if I ever do an entire book and not one single panel gives me any trouble, then I will quit comic books and go off and do something else, and I still hold that as a rule. But I think that things are happening that are more like what I want to happen. The pictures in my head are coming closer to being the pictures on the page. And the words are flowing better now. I was obviously in the early issues [of *The Fantastic Four*], very self-conscious and very aware that I was writing comics. And now I'm just writing instead of worrying about it. So it's all falling together. The inking is starting to happen too. This is why I'm constantly looking for different ways to do it. So I feel that I'm about 50 percent of what I want to be. And I hope that's always the case. Because otherwise, there is no point in going on. Once you achieve what you want to do, then it's time to look for something else.

SANDERSON: *Well, that brings us to the end, and that was even a good tag line.*

BYRNE: Oh, good. [*laughs*].

PETER SANDERSON has written extensively on comics for Amazing Heroes *and animation for* The Comics Journal, *in addition to editing* The X-Men Companions. *He is currently an editor at Marvel Comics.*

THE CHARLTON CONNECTION

Long before The X-Men, the Fantastic Four, and Alpha Flight, John Byrne gave his all to Rog 2000, Doomsday + 1, and Wheelie and the Chopper Bunch...

by Lou Mougin

'Way back in the year 1975, about the time Professor X was gathering an international team of mutants to save the X-Men from Krakoa, the Island That Walked Like a Man, a new artist debuted at Charlton Comics in the pages of *E-Man* #6. The feature was *Rog-2000* and the artist was John Byrne.

As far as professional comic book work goes *this* is where it all began.

For a debut, it wasn't bad. Charlton was, to be sure, an also-ran comics publisher compared to Marvel and DC, but they *were* frequently off-the-wall and creative—Steve Ditko had made his home there for years, and *E-Man*, their best title, was drawing praise from critics for Nick Cuti and Joe Staton's light-touch super-heroics. And Rog-2000, a bulky, bowlegged robot with the grumpy humor of Ben Grimm, was the perfect complement, lumbering his way through eight pages of tongue-in-cheek heroics. Rog, a metallic New York cabbie, defeated a villain named Magno (his gimmick was a gun that dismantled buildings, cabs, and even robots) with the help of his creator "Burns" (guess who) and an android hippie with laser-vision. The story was framed with a sequence in Duffy's Tavern, operated by one Duffy Vohland, and therein we find the link to Rog-2000's earlier history—and the earlier work of John Byrne.

Byrne had been a member of the now-legendary *CPL* "Gang." Chaired informally by Duffy Vohland, the group included Larry Brnicky, Roger Stern, Bob Layton, and Roger Slifer and had been publishing *CPL* (Contemporary Pictorial Literature) since the early 1970s. Byrne's major contribution was *CPL*'s mascot, Rog-2000, who appeared in spot illustrations (once sticking pins in a voodoo doll of Magnus, Robot Fighter) and finally appeared in his own comic strip, "The Coming of the Gang!," which co-starred the aforementioned Stern, Vohland, Layton, Brnicky, and Slifer. Byrne himself appeared in the very last panel of the story, his head between his hands as he stared into space seated at Duffy's

From *Charlton Bullseye* #1, a Captain Atom strip penciled by Steve Ditko, inked and lettered by John Byrne

all new
CHARLTON
PUBLICATION
APPROVED BY THE COMICS CODE AUTHORITY
CHARLTON COMICS
30p
UK-10P
JUL 76/CDC
SPACE: 1999
LEADING
©1974 Charlton Comics

bar and lamented, "S'treuth! Three years of art-college for *this*?"

The Gang—and Byrne—came to the attention of Charlton editor George Wildman and *E-Man* writer Nicola Cuti when they were granted permission to publish an issue of *CPL* devoted entirely to the Charlton super-heroes. Wildman was casting about for second-string super-heroes to give trial appearances in the back of *E-Man*, and Cuti, taken with Rog-2000, suggested the battling bolt-bucket for a regular backup feature. Cuti scripted all four of Rog's outings in *E-Man* #6, 7, 9, and 10, pitting him against amoeboid adversaries in Gothic settings, old-lady witches bent on turning him into a human while hit-men stalked him with deadly automatics, and The Sog, a Man-Thing parody-creature spawned from the garbage of the New York streets. (Incidentally, the splash from this last story, with Rog in military gear stalking the streets of a deserted Gotham, is an unmistakable forerunner for the splash of *X-Men* #141 six years later, right down to the lettering.) All in all, it was quite a fun series.

Then *E-Man* died, and Rog-2000 died with it. Well... *almost*. His Detroit-reject body served as the prototype for the 1978 model Robotman in DC Comic's *New Doom Patrol* (acknowledged by Byrne in a *Comic Reader* cover). Rog himself would turn up in unexpected places, as on the cover of *The Art of John Byrne*, where he faced down a host of cowering Marvel heroes. And robots would constantly slip into Byrne-drawn stories, always noted in the credits as coming from "Byrne Robotics." Thus Rog's legacy continues.

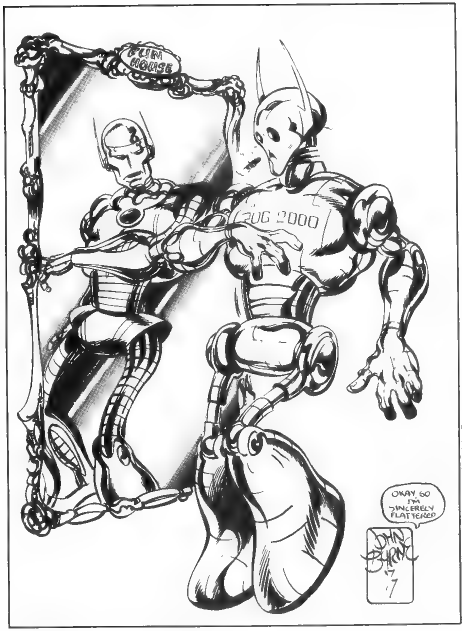
In the meantime, Byrne had landed new assignments from Charlton. He illustrated the first two issues of *Wheelie and the Chopper Bunch*, *Ghost of Doctor Graves* #54. This finished out the remainder of 1975, with the addition of one more book... his first frontline series, *Doomsday +1*.

Doomsday was the creation of Charlton superveteran Joe Gill, and it was in its time one of the nicest little post-holocaust series since the Atomic Knights. It opened innocuously enough, with Captain Boyd Ellis, USAF, smooching with NASA scientist Jill Malden, while Ikei Yashida, a Japanese lovely in a green bathing suit, stood nearby threatening to throw a bucket of water on the twosome. (She was a physicist; in case you were interested.) The threesome head off for a seven-day orbital flight in a space capsule, but on Earth... well, things were happening. A doomed South American dictator decided to go out spectacularly, with World War III, and directed two nukes at Washington and Moscow. Two sorrowful leaders blast the world to bits, while Captain Ellis and his two ladies look on. Doomsday. And plus one?

The heroes land on the melting Greenland ice cap, one of the few

areas on Earth not completely contaminated by radiation. They proceed to find a wooly mammoth, straight out of the deep freeze, which charges them and is stopped dead by a spear hurled by a similarly-unfrozen 4th-Century Goth named Kuno. The trio teach him pidgin English and, for the rest of the issue, learn how to cope with their new predicament, which includes being strafed by a Russian aircraft. The story continues from there into the second issue, where they battle an air base manned by Byrne-patented robots run by the cyborg Dr. Vladislav Yomorov. The art is roughhewn, but pleasant enough, and there are only a few panels of static between each explosion, thrown stone axe, or haymaker. In the end, Kuno saves the day, and Yomorov swears revenge on Ellis and his compatriots before they vanish over the horizon in a jet plane. Jill, formerly Boyd's lover, starts to carry a torch for Kuno, even though the group hangs together at least as well as the old Fantastic Four (There's more than a casual resemblance to the Marvel bunch, too, but disregard that for the nonce.)

The third *Doomsday Plus One* pits our heroes against another group of robotic beings called the Peace-Keepers, who vote to destroy the Earth before Kuno, with a sentimental speech concerning the grandeur of Terra—and a hurled axe—convinces the prime Peace-Keeper to desist. The fourth issue, fronting a beautiful Byrne cover, takes the Doomsdayers to an underwater "Hidden Empire" below the Pacific, peopled by two races of fish-men. In #5, the foursome come upon a renegade remnant of Air Force personnel living in a Minutemen silo beneath New York City. By *Doomsday* #6, the locale shifts as Boyd, Jill, Ikei, and Kuno are thrust onto an alternate Earth with a humanoid ruling class and a gorilloid race of slaves. In the end they phased back to our own, irradiated world. This was the final issue of *Doomsday*, but the foursome saw one more adventure in the pages of *Charlton Bullseye*, Charlton's 1977 house fanzine. All six issues were reprinted later on as *Doomsday Plus One* #7-12 in 1978-79, with several of Byrne's fine covers eliminated completely and the rest printed without the distinctive inks that made the originals so pleasurable to look upon. Nonetheless, *Doomsday Plus One* was a decent series, but doomed (no pun intended), like most Charlton hero-series, to an early demise—in its case, much too early.



John Byrne comments on DC's new Robotman in this humorous illustration from *The Comic Reader* #149.

Following that, Charlton shut down its operations entirely and converted its comics to all reprint books. John Byrne packed up his artboards and hitched a ride to Marvel Comics in late 1976. We *all* know what happened to him then.

LOU MOUGIN, a noted comics historian, writes frequently for Amazing Heroes, *The Comic Reader, and other fanzines.*

ROGIE REVISITED

A look back at John Byrne's own Stainless Steel Robot, from fanzines to comic books. . .

by R.C. Harvey

Rog-2000 is one of the happiest inventions of the last decade of comics. And now we have virtually all of him between the covers of *The Complete Rog 2000*, published for a mere $2.95 by the obliging Pacific Comics folks, who know a good thing when they see it.

For those of you who came in only lately, Rog 2000 is a stainless steel robot, the comic creation of John Byrne and, as nearly as I can tell, the vehicle by which the Canadian cartoonist entered professional comics.

Although Rogie was born across the border, he first surfaced in Indianapolis where a mildly madcap clutch of comics fans produced, on an irritatingly irregular schedule, a tiny fanzine they insisted was a quarterly publication. *Contemporary Pictorial Literature*, they called it—*CPL* for short. (They called themselves the CPL gang, and a frighteningly high percentage of them are now toiling in the professional vineyards.)

Rogie came in over the transom at the CPL Gangsters' hideaway—with several other drawings submitted by Byrne. Legend has it that Rogie arrived just in time to reconcile editorial disputes between co-editors Roger Slifer and Roger Stern. To evade the issue of who had which responsibilities, they both decided to pin it all on Byrne's robot, and they christened him appropriately with the name they shared.

Combining the roles of mascot and scapegoat, Rogie appeared in *CPL*'s pages from #6 through #10 as a marginal decoration, presiding in surly bemusement over the letters page and introducing each issue on the table of contents page. Reader reaction made it apparent that Rog should graduate from spot illustration to comic strip character, and in issue #11, the robot was launched into sequential panels.

Meanwhile, the CPL gang were frying other finny things: they were belaboring George Wildman and Nick Cuti of Charlton about producing a Charlton fanzine called *Bullseye*. And during the summer of 1974, they ran into the Charlton editors during the New York Comicon, where Cuti saw the somewhat un-done Rogie strip, which the ebullient Gang had been carting around toe very comiccon they attended that summer.

As Cuti tells it in *Complete*, he fell in love with "the spunky, burly robot, who stands on bow-legged cables and has church bells for feet." He and Wildman were look-

Rog 2000 in his *CPL* days.

1975 John Byrne

WHILE ON A SELF-IMPOSED VACATION IN CASTLEVILLE, ROG 2000 BECOMES AN UNWILLING GUEST OF AN ANCIENT SORCERESS WITH A STRANGE REPUTATION!
RRRRRRRR!
AT PRESENT, ROG IS CONTEMPLATING WHETHER OR NOT TO ACCEPT THE INVITATION TO LEAVE!
THEY MADE ME WATCH PROOF AND SHOW HOW TO USE THE GUN AND THE GAME I USE TO BLAST D CAR.
MEANWHILE, GEORGE WILDMAN ROOM... HAVE A CUT ME YOU, JOHN!
HERRING HEIGHTS
WHOOPS! I GUESS THERE'S A SHORT IN THE EX-MEMORY CELL-JUNCTIONS.
I HAVE TO GET TO A GAS STATION BEFORE I BLOW ONE IN THESE OLD HOUSE GIRLS! HELP ME.
AN ANCIENT PLACE, I'VE THAT PROBABLY RUNS ON GAS.
GAS, HOOK, GAS WHERE CAN I GET A BUCKET OF THAT AROUND HERE
1974 Charlton Comics

BUT BEFORE I TACKLE RUNNING AGAIN, I'D BETTER GET SOME INFO ON HIS GUN FROM BURNS
THAT'S DONE...
IF THAT JERK DIDN'T MAKE IT CLEAR, HE'S SUPPOSED TO KNOW WHO DID!
BURNS LIVES IN CRANFORD, MAYBE 5 STRAIGHT AHEAD...
IF THAT'S TRUE, THEN WHY THE HECK AM I WALKING...
IN TWO O-RECTION?
AFTER REVERSING MY LEGS, I FINALLY MADE IT TO CRANFORD. WHERE I DROPPED IN ON MY CREATOR.
BURNS!
LORD! IT'S THAT ROBOT FROM BURNS AGAIN!
DO YOU KNOW ANY THING ABOUT AN ANCIENT MAGNETIC GUN?
YOU KNOW HOW I CONTROL CLIMB!
1974 Charlton Comics

Two pages from the Rog 2000 stories that were published in *E-Man*. Below, Rog 2000 meets Magnus Robot Fighter

ing for a back-up feature for *E-Man*, and Rogie looked right for the job.

"I liked the way John had designed Rog," Cuti recalls. "Before Rog, all robots were either clunky or silver-skinned humans. Rog was complex and yet tough. He had a physique that reminded me of my NCO when I was stationed in France and, though he never chewed on a cigar butt, I would not have been surprised to see one clenched in Rog's flexible, unjointed lips.

"Also important was the fact that John's art style did not conflict with Joe Staton's humorous style on E-Man. Neither artist drew realistic figures. They kept the 'comic' in the term 'comic art.'"

And so Rog 2000 debuted in *E-Man* #6 in late 1974 shortly after his first strip appearance in CPL #11. He made it into *E-Man* three more times (#7, #9, #10) before the magazine folded, and all four of these stories plus the CPL debut are reprinted in this collection.

Riding on the coat-tails of his creation, Byrne went on to draw *Doomsday Plus One* and from there, into the Marvel fold. Rog, meanwhile, languished in unemployment lines, until now.

Rog's first story, CPL's "The Coming of the Gang," was written by Stern; his Charlton appearances, by Cuti. Stern's story, a bit of self-indulgent nonsense, is good fun but slender stuff. Cuti's stories flesh out the robot's character, building on Stern's lead.

Cuti wrestled with various approaches to the Rog stories before

settling on the one that emerges here. "I thought about setting his stories in the future, where I could set up a parody of human foibles, using robots to act out different faults, but it would have meant watering down the Rog character, since he would be only one robot among many. Rog was my main interest, and his charm was that he was perfectly comfortable being a robot in a human world. That was my storyline."

A New York cabbie by trade, Rog is an accidental if not reluctant hero, falling into adventures rather than seeking them out. And his vaguely cynical, slightly sardonic surliness compliments the mild satire of the often parodic tales. He takes on a vengeful supervillain, a haunted house, a witch, and a swamp thing.

The stories are light-hearted outings and each ends aptly with a comic clincher. The swampy Sog, for example, defeats himself: he dies from over-eating. "There was too much garbage in New York, even for the Sog," Rog explains.

The stories are sprinkled with amusements, too. In one tale, Rog falls apart as a result of the villain's assault and then puts himself back together, muttering all the while like a frustrated father assembling his kids' toys on Christmas Eve. Of course, Rog makes an assembly mistake and winds up walking backwards. And at Duffy's Tavern, his favorite drink is machine oil—served in a stemmed martini glass with a bolt instead of an olive.

Byrne's work improves over the course of the five stories only slightly: he was, even at this beginning, an accomplished cartoonist. The later stories make more skillful use of black, for instance; but most of the stories, which appear here in black and white, still need the addition of color for their best visual clarity and emphasis. The women in these stories are monotonously round-faced, and the lettering is a trifle tentative. But Byrne's layouts are imaginative enough to be several cuts above the mundane, and his pacing, for the most part, sure-footed

The book, which included an introduction by Stern and a roll-call of the CPL Gang's subsequent adventures as well as Cuti's recollections, makes only one glaring gaffe: pagination on the haunted house story has been jumbled. Otherwise, it's a fine 40-page production with a freshly rendered Rogie wraparound cover in full color.

Rog 2000 and Michael Mauser, together again for the first time

Rog 2000 John Byrne, Mike Mauser Fiest Comics Inc

But Rog 2000 himself rises above all the virtues of both book and stories. Cuti was (and is) right: Rog is a visual innovation in the rendering of robots. And it is as a visual creation that he attracts our affection.

His body is clearly a mechanical device: his wheeled joints all but reveal the gears within. But recognizable humanoid components (lower arms, torso) signal that the machine has a personality, and his flat-faced visage Byrne contrives to make remarkably expressive. As a final stroke, Byrne's patented highlighting techniques give Rog's stainless steel body a liquid chromium sheen, and the mechanical man all but rings with a metallic ding.

The book includes a tongue-in-cheek "How to Draw Rogie" exercise, and for my money, there could have been more pages filled with reprints of the CPL spot illustrations in which Rog first appeared.

Seeing Rog lurch along through these pages makes one wish that Byrne and Marvel would revive Cuti's dream for a book devoted solely to the exploits of the robot. Well—if not Marvel, how about Pacific Comics, eh, John?

R.C. HARVEY, himself no slouch at cartooning, writes regularly on comics for The Comics Journal. *He is currently working on a book about comic strip great Milton Caniff.*

MATURING WITH THE K'UN-LUN KID

John Byrne first made his mark at Marvel with a Chris Claremont-written series about a Kung Fu fighter. . .

by Ken Hart

John Byrne's first two series for Marvel were *Iron Fist* and *The Champions*. Both have interesting links to Byrne's later (and more popular) X-Men work. *Iron Fist* marked the original series collaboration between Byrne and Chris Claremont, and the final issue of that book featured their first joint X-Men story; and *The Champions* was Byrne's first series work on a team—a team which included two ex-X-Men.

Byrne's depiction of the adventures of Danny Rand did not begin with the first issue of Iron Fist's magazine. It started with the previous installment, *Marvel Premiere* #25 (October, 1975). The splash page is curious: Iron Fist is attacked by Khumbala Bey, who is located dead center on the page; the star of the book, however, is seen from the rear, his face hidden—a strange beginning for what would become a long and exciting "partnership" between Byrne and the character.

During the fight with Khumbala Bey, Byrne uses three trios of panels on pages 2 and 3 to illustrate the action. With a fixed angle for each sequence, the movements resemble still photos taken in rapid succession. This would evolve into the "multiple image panels" in later issues of *Iron Fist*, increasing Byrne's renown among fans. The art in *Premiere* #25 is somewhat unrefined when compared with Byrne's later work, but even here, Byrne uses a wide variety of angles to illustrate new scene and settings, such as Princess Azir's courtyard on page six. Repetition is also put to good effect, as shown by the car chase and the nearly-slain children on page 16.

On both this issue and *Iron Fist* #1, Byrne's pencils aren't helped by the inking of Al McWilliams; the net result is crude, leaving many of the characters with bland faces, despite imaginative layouts. *IF* #1 is important because it introduces Davos (who would temporarily steal the power of Shou-Lao months later) in a suitably creepy sequence on pages 16-17. The book also features Byrne's first rendition of Misty Knight, who looks quite different here than she would in succeeding issues, wearing a super-heroine-type outfit complete with monogrammed belt buckle and hip-high boots. Another character who looks different in this issue is the guest star, Iron Man. At this time in

Byrne's first regular series for Marvel: *Iron Fist* [Inks by Frank Chiaramonte.]

HE'S...COMING AT ME AGAIN! PRESSING ME! DIZZY... BUT--
--GOT TO STOP HIM! MAKE HIM LISTEN!
GOT TO USE... IRON FIST AGAINST HIM!
© 1984 Marvel Comics Group

THE NAME IS CAPTAIN AMERICA!
AND YOU'RE IRON FIST, THE KUNG FU KILLER.
WELL, KILLER, YOU'D BETTER PRAY YOU'D HAVEN'T ADDED JARVIS TO YOUR LIST OF VICTIMS -- BECAUSE IF YOU HAVE --
-- I'M GOING TO MAKE YOU WISH YOU'D NEVER BEEN BORN!

1964 Marvel Comics Group

I KNOW A MURDERER WHEN I SEE ONE—AND I SWORE NEVER TO ABIDE KILLERS. IF HE'D GOTTEN AWAY HE WOULD HAVE KILLED AGAIN...
...SO I HAD TO STOP HIM.
WHY'D YOU GET INVOLVED? YOU SOME SORTA FLIPPIN SUPER-HERO?
NO. I MEAN... I...
...I MEAN, HE... THAT IS, SCIMITAR. HE...
WOW
I NEVER THOUGHT ABOUT IT BEFORE.
A SUPER-HERO...
...I GUESS I AM.
1984 Marvel Comics Group

Iron Fist realizes he's a super-hero. [Inks by Frank Chiaramonte.]

the Golden Avenger's own series, Tony Stark had added a nose and grimace to his helmet. When viewed from a distance of eight years, Iron Man looks weird—interesting, but weird.

It's not until the second issue ("Valley of the Damned") that Byrne's talent really becomes noticeable. *Iron Fist* #2-7 are inked by Frank Chiaramonte, and the art has the intensity and contrast which the previous issues lacked. The splash page for *Iron Fist* #2, showing Iron Fist beside the comatose Professor Wing, conveys its emotion with an eerie silence. Atmosphere is also the key to the meeting between Colleen and Master Khan (pp. 16-17). The shifting angles and the shadow-creatures superbly create a scene full of tension and unearthly evil.

Byrne also shows the city of K'un-Lun and its inhabitants. The other-diminsional land had not been featured in the series for many issues, so Byrne was presented with the opportunity he exploits to the utmost degree. The costume designs and the crystalline structure of the city are excellent. The tale is mostly a flashback, and it includes the first use of the power of the Iron Fist, which is suitably dramatic and action-packed.

The layouts continue to improve in *Iron Fist* #3, but the artwork, for some reason, has been extensively "retouched," apparently by John Romita. Byrne uses panel inserts effectively to illustrate the plane crash and Danny's summoning of the Iron Fist. the next issue's conclusion to the Ravager story ("Holocaust") features the best work yet. Just as the second issue's splash page was silent, *Iron Fist* #4's splash page explodes with power. On page three, Byrne shifts from a TV screen to the three viewers in the Meachum office, but they look as though *they* are the ones being seen through a lens. Nice touch.

Later in the story, the mortally-injured Iron Fist uses his power to heal his wounds, and Byrne makes sure enough room is left around Danny's fist so that Chris Claremont can supply the explanatory narrative. But the scene is so well constructed that verbal explanations aren't necessary: the reader can deduce what is happening from Iron Fist's expressions, the visions he sees, and the arrangement of panels. Page 22 shows Byrne's first use of a multiple action panel in the series, as the hero is knocked off a tower and propels himself back to the top. Everything about this issue worked as perfectly as anyone could want.

By this time, the magazine is "hot," and Byrne's talent is maturing along with Danny Rand. Issues #5-7 mark the conclusion to the search for Colleen Wing, and each story has elements of interest. *Iron Fist* #5 has a nice three-panel sequence in which Danny bemusedly realizes that he's a super-hero: his expression changes from instant denial to amusing awareness. The scene in K'un-Lun in *Iron Fist* #6 burst forth with the anger between Yu-Ti and Lei Kung the Thunderer. In that same issue, Iron Fist must battle the brain-washed Colleen in the midst of one of Angar the Screamer's mindstorms. Byrne tosses aside reality on the double-page spread on pages 16-17, and he does a great job of making the distortions look "authentic." The panorama of past images running side-by-side during the "mind-meld" is also highly effective.

The layouts in the story's final chapter ("Iron Fist Must Die," *IF* #7) are excellent, with such highlights as: Colleen's vengeance on Angar (showing first the empty scabbard of her sword, and then the bloodied samurai blade), and the issue's climax, as Khan is sucked into a dimensional vortex (Byrne uses diagonal panels to intensify the sense of the wind's irresistable pull). Iron Fist's hand fails to grasp Khan's on page 30, but in a similar panel on the next page, he succeeds in reaching out to Colleen in friendship.

The next three issues (*IF* #8-10) mark a complete change of scenery, as Iron Fist returns to New York and battles Chaka and his gang, the Golden Tigers. Dan Adkins is the inker for the following few issues, with one exception (Chiaramonte returns for *IF* #9). Adkins inks are darker and more solid than Chiaramonte's, lending a "down-to-earth" feel to the tales. Byrne returns to the Big Apple along with Danny, as he includes himself in #8's opening scene. Of special note here are the "phantoms" of memory that Danny encounters upon going back to his

home after more than ten years, and the simultaneous arrivals of both Danny's group and the Golden Tigers at the Meachum Building (the top halves of pages 26, 27 and 30 show the progress of Danny, Misty and Jeryn Hogarth, while the bottom halves illustrate the movements of the Tigers over the same period of time).

Byrne's storytelling ability is really smooth at this point, resulting in such well-done scenes as Iron Fist's attack upon Chaka and his purging of the poison from his body (both in *IF* #9). Issue #10, page 16, begins with a gradual approach to the offices of Nightwing Restorations . . . as seen through the eyes of Chaka. Page 23 is a beautiful example of teamwork between writer and artist; it's one large "multiple action panel" showing Iron Fist and Chaka tumbling down a flight of stairs, yet in the one panel, not less than five separate actions take place.

Iron Fist #11 ("A Fine Day's Dying", February 1977) features the hero's first, straight-forward battle with a group of super-villains, the Wrecking Crew. (This same month, Byrne's first issue of *The Champions*—also #11—reached the stands.) In addition to that aspect, this issue includes brief appearances by Matt Murdock, Heather Glenn, Jim Shooter, Roger Stern, Scott Summers and Jean Grey. The preparation for the explosive appearance of the Wrecking Crew is interesting; Danny and Misty walk through a park as he becomes introspective about K'un-Lun and his own identity. It's a very peaceful scene, containing rolling clouds, wind-blown leaves and birds flying in formation, and it's also obvious that Misty looks far more attractive then she did months ago. The serenity is suddenly shattered by the Wrecking Crew's arrival.

Later in the issue, Iron Fist fights the Wrecker for possession of the villain's mystic bar. This scene, with auras of energy surrounding the combatants, is highly reminiscent of Jack Kirby's work on the *Fantastic Four*, particularly the tale where Dr. Doom stole the Silver Surfer's cosmic power.

The second half of this story (*IF* #12) features a guest appearance by Captain America. Byrne's depiction of Cap is incredibly powerful (and would become more so when, years later, Byrne became Cap's regular penciller for an all-too-short period of time). The full-page shot on page six conveys one basic image: Cap is a big dude. With the exception of Iron Fist and Wolverine, Cap is probably Byrne's most visually "alive" super-hero. Even the uppercut Cap lays on the Wrecker hints at better things to come.

Curiously, Misty's blouse and skirt were torn, apparently between issues, exposing more thigh and a bare shoulder. Whether Byrne is casting aspersions on the "gentlemenly" behavior of the Wrecking Crew or whether he simply altered her appearance just for the hell of it is unknown.

The 13th issue does turn out to be a bit unlucky. While the art is by no means poor, it falls below the

Iron Fist #11 introduces the Wrecking Crew. [Inks by Dan Adkins.]

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HEADS UP, SUB! WOLVERINE'S COMIN' AT'CHA!
HUH?!?
THE MANIACS COMING THROUGH THE WINDOW! I COME HERE LOOKING FOR HELP, AND END UP FIGHTING FOR MY LIFE!
BEHIND ME-- THAT SUDDEN STENCH OF BRIMSTONE! WHAT--?!
© 1984 Marvel Comics Group

John Byrne tests his X-Men muscles in the final issue of *Iron Fist*, #15 [Inks by Dan Green.]

high standards that the previous stories had established for the series. The battle scenes with Boomerang lack excitement; since Boomerang prefers airborne attacks, Byrne uses "long-range" shots to capture most of the action, and consequently, the fight loses a good deal of intensity. The best scene is pages 16-17, where Iron Fist and Misty argue about Alan Cavenaugh, former IRA bomber and now Danny's friend. The deeply-felt emotions of both characters are shown extremely well, especially when Misty chooses between her beliefs and Danny—Iron Fist loses.

Dan Green takes over from Dan Adkins as the inker for the final two issues of the title. Green is a further improvement. The dark outlines around the characters and the close attention to facial expressions enhance the subtleties of movement and emotion. (Sabretooth's anger as he literally strips Iron Fist from his disguise on page 17 is a good example.) A blinded Iron Fist must battle the deadly Sabretooth (we all know he was supposed to be Wolverine's father), and Danny remembers some of his training from Lei Kung; Byrne sets up two rows of four panels, with each picture from the past having an exact analogy in the present.

The final issue is called, simply enough: "Enter, the X-Men" (September 1977). Because this story appeared only three months before Byrne's *X-Men* debut (#108), there is little difference between the appearances of the mutants in *IF* #15 and in the early Byrne *X-Men*. Wolverine is already terrific, and here he is still wearing the costume stolen from Fang of the Imperial Guard. Although many readers seemed to prefer that uniform over the yellow-and-black costume, Byrne didn't like it. He drew Wolverine, but he refused to draw the costume, which was reportedly pencilled in by Marie Severin. Byrne's Nightcrawler is quite good, and page 17 is a marvelous scene as he sees a maniac, a demon and a man of steel coming at him from all sides. Ororo, of course, is gorgeous—before she gets hit by a flying, comically ominous bowl of salad on page 22. The mysterious characters John Byrne, Chris Claremont, and Dave Cockrum (the latter two from *X-Men* #105) all appear on the issue's (and the series') final page.

Claremont and Byrne would chronicle the next important steps in Danny Rand's life in *Marvel Team-Up* #63-64 and then *Power Man* #48-49, leading to *Powerman and Iron Fist* #50. Byrne's connection with Iron Fist came to an end. But in the same month that the artist began a partnership with the X-Men, Danny Rand was beginning a partnership with Luke Cage. Byrne and Iron Fist had already done much to establish each other's reputation, but it was time to take another step up.

Byrne's work on *The Champions* can almost be considered a "training session" for the *X-Men*. It's the first time he had drawn a large group of colorful heroes on a regular basis. It's also his first Marvel series with a writer other than Claremont (Bill Mantlo).

The Champions were interesting because there seemed little possibility of a group made up of such wildly different, volatile characters staying together for very long. They didn't. The regular line-up was the Black Widow, Hercules, the Ghost Rider, Iceman and the Angel. Byrne had to illustrate a team that rarely used teamwork. He was inked on his first three issues (#11-13) by Bob Layton, whose work has a much more individual style than other inkers who had worked with Byrne up to this point; when Bob Layton inks something, you immediately know it. His inks usually give the

characters a sleeker, glossier appearance.

Some of Byrne's Champions look superb, but other do not. The Angel is terrific, looking his best whenever he dove or arced his body at a 90° angle. His wings, while visually impressive, are so big that you wonder how Warren succeeded in hiding them when he was an X-Man. Byrne's Ghost Rider, while appearing more super-heroic, still has a macabre visage, with his flaming head and maniacal eyes. Johnny Blaze still controlled his demonic self at this time, but the Ghost Rider often seems on the brink of insanity. The Black Widow is a classic beauty as depicted by Byrne, yet you know she's the one in command. Her face is reminiscent of Sigourney Weaver's; Byrne apparently enjoyed that kind of look even two-and-a-half years before the release of the movie *Alien*. Byrne has said he often chooses one character from whatever series he's working on and makes it his "own" (e.g. the Scarlet Witch in *Avengers* and Wolverine in *X-Men*). If Byrne's work on *The Champions* had continued, Natasha may have become his "choice."

Hercules is a disappointment. Although he's one of the strongest beings in the Marvel Universe, he doesn't look very dynamic. In fact, he's quite stiff, with none of Byrne's usual vivid facial expressions.

Iceman looks very bland in the first two Byrne issues, but by *Champions* #13, his appearance in more "polished," with sharp, effective features. (By the time Byrne and Layton worked again on 1978's great *Hulk Annual*, their Iceman was excellent.)

Darkstar unofficially joins the group in issue #11, and she stays with the team for the rest of its existence. She is a visually uninteresting character. Although by no means unattractive, Darkstar lacks the energy of the Black Widow. She simply fires black stuff ("the Darkforce") and glides around a lot.

Guest-starring in Byrne's first three issues is Black Goliath. With the exception of an annoyingly powerless splash page in *Champions* #12, he's very good. Because of his size, he has great potential as a scene-stealer, and he's more mobile than Hercules apparently is.

AND ABOVE...
THAT STILT-WALKING SKUNK IS TEARING MY TEAMMATES APART! HE'S ALREADY WALKED OUT OF ICE--
--BUT HE HASN'T RECKONED WITH HELLFIRE YET!
© 1984 Marvel Comics Group

Ghost Rider, from *Champions* #12. [Inks by Bob Layton.]

Highlights in the first story ("The Shadow from the Stars") are: the destruction of Warlord Kaa by the Angel as the nearly-possessed Warren flies high into the sky causing the shadow which Kaa inhabited to fade into nothingness; and the subsequent attack on the Ditko-esque shadow men's spaceship as guest star Hawkeye fires a Hellfire-coated blast arrow into the craft, creating an explosion and flash which literally rip the shadow men to shreds.

Byrne illustrates a marvelous Stilt-Man in *Champions* #12. An especially good scene begins on page 11, where the Ghost Rider apparently traps the villain by imprisoning his good pods in the molten tar that used to be a street. Stilt-Man simply detaches the lower section of his "legs" and walks away (an understatement, in this case). What makes this scene work is the expression his body conveys as he separates from the lower sections: total disdain for this group of foolish heroes who failed to stop him. Byrne succeeds in conveying Stilt-Man's contempt in spite of the fact that Stilt-Man wears an unchanging helmet. Later in the issue, as the Champions battle the Stranger, Byrne includes intermittent panels showing a TV broadcast of Black Goliath's struggle with, and victory over, Stilt-Man. This slight juxtaposition works well and does not interfere with the flow of action at the Champions Building.

Issue #3 opens with a very interesting splash: Black Goliath and a crowd approach the Champion's headquarters, which is being engulfed by the Stranger's Null-Life Bomb, and which is surrounded by the spectral heads of the Champions. It instantly creates a sense of eerie tension. Pages 6-7 are also interesting. Each half of both pages deals with the actions of a different Champion (Angel, GR, Darkstar and Iceman) against the forces of Kamo Tharn. Although they're separated, there is still a sense of unity. Pages 16-17 are bordered by identical panels of Kamo Tharn scrutinizing four of the Champions, who are apparently mesmerized. Between these seemingly incongruous panels, however, the regular action of the story continues.

The knowledge that much of the battle was an illusion (as revealed later) does not detract from the issue's best scene: the Ghost

Darkstar, from *Champions* #13. [Inks by Bob Layton.]

CEASE STRUGGLING, UNUS... THIS UNIT HAS CANCELLED YOUR REPELLING POWERS!
NO! HELP!
BY THE GODS, MILADY! THEY DO IGNORE US, DENYING THOSE WHO PETITIONED OUR AID THE RIGHT OF SANCTUARY!
HONOR NOW DEMANDS MERCILESS ENTER THE PRAY--
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From the 17th and last issue of *Champions*, an unusual art team: John Byrne inks George Tuska

Rider—his leather jacket hanging in tatters around his flaming, skeletal body—stares with awesome hatred at the winged demon which has "slain" the Black Widow. Except for a bony forearm way back in the Mike Ploog issues of *Marvel Spotlight*, there had been no indication before this issue of what the Ghost Rider's true form was. This remains the most dynamic, dramatic portrait of the Ghost Rider ever.

Issues #14-15 introduce Swarm. That's the good part. The bad part is that they are poorly inked by Mike Esposito. Actually, Byrne seems to have been only slightly involved with *Champions* #15, providing little more than rough layouts. The differences in the faces of the characters (such as the sudden "removal" of the Ghost Rider's eyes) strongly indicate this.

Swarm is a terrific villain for both writer and artist. He's an "aggregate man," with a "body" of killer bees controlled by an evil human intelligence. He "walks" on air, and kills people by removing his glove and sending part of his body toward the victim. In other words, he's dynamite visually. Byrne deserves applause for Swarm's impressive debut.

Page 30 of *Champions* #14 features a nice variety of emotions: annoyance (Johnny Blaze), quiet embarrassment (Hercules), anger (Bobby Drake), and fear (Angel).

The cause of Warren's anxiety is an enormous swarm of killer bees, which attacks the team and Los Angeles in the next issue. The art in the conclusion is mediocre in comparison to the previous stories: the layouts are fine (Swarm's origin is a good example), but the inks are mostly flat, thin lines, adding no depth of expression. The "death" of Swarm, as the bees flee his body, is eye-catching, imaginative and enjoyably creepy.

This was the last issue of *Champions* which Byrne pencilled, but it did not end his involvement in the series. Four months later, the final issue of the magazine (#17, "The Sentinels Hunt Again," January 1978) reached the stands. It features the inks of John Byrne over the pencils of George Tuska. The result is . . . weird.

Tuska's characters are in constant motion. Even when they sit down, they lean forward or wave their arms. Byrne's inks here produce approximately the same effect that Bob Layton's did on Byrne's pencils dark, spotlighting the actions and expressions of the characters against their backgrounds. (Witness the way Darkstar, Ghost Rider and Iceman work together on page 17—by highlighting portions of the heroes and the manifestations of their powers differently, Byrne produces a good 3-D illusion.)

Most of the characters fit the Tuska mold. The exception is Iceman, who looks as though he's still being drawn by Byrne (see pp. 16-17). Iceman is certainly difficult to illustrate, and Tuska may have had some problems. Byrne also does some "retouching" on other characters as well, such as the Widow's face at the top of page 7. But overall, Tuska and Byrne makes a very intriguing team, yet it's doubtful that they were meant to do more than one story. Regardless, this was the unusual duo's first and last issue—because it was the last issue of *The Champions*. Like *Iron Fist*, the magazine was killed by poor sales.

Byrne didn't have to worry about keeping busy, however. In fact, the *X-Men* went monthly later in 1978. But his work on *The Champions*, short-lived though it was, is important for the insights it gives into his pencilling on the *X-Men*, and for the hints it gave readers as to what they could expect from John Byrne in the future.

KEN HART writes for Amazing Heroes *and lives in New York, not necessarily in that order.*

CHECKLIST

ALPHA FLIGHT

#1, Aug '83
"Tundra!"
Writer: Byrne
Artist: Byrne
Inker: Byrne
Cover: Byrne
38 pp.

#2, Sept '83
"Shadows of the Past!"
Writer. Byrne
Artist. Byrne
Inker: Byrne
17 pp.
"In the Beginning"
Writer. Byrne
Artist. Byrne
Inker: Byrne
5 pp
Cover: Byrne

#3, Oct '83
"Yesterday Man"
Writer. Byrne
Artist: Byrne
Inker: Byrne
17 pp.
"Purpose"
Writer. Byrne
Artist. Byrne
Inker: Byrne
6 pp.
Cover: Byrne

#4, Nov '83
"Resolutions!"
Writer: Byrne
Artist Byrne
Inker Byrne
Cover Byrne
22 pp

#5, Dec '83
"What Fools These Mortals Be. . . "
Writer: Byrne
Artist: Byrne
Inker: Byrne
17 pp.
"Deathwatch"
Writer. Byrne
Artist Byrne
Inker: Byrne
5 pp
Cover: Byrne

#6, Jan '84
"Snowblind"
Writer: Byrne
Artist Byrne
Inker: Byrne
16 pp
"The Old Ways"
Writer: Byrne
Artist Byrne
Inker: Byrne
6 pp
Cover Byrne

#7, Feb '84
"The Importance Of Being Deadly"
Writer: Byrne
Artist Byrne
Inker Byrne
15 pp
"Let a Child Be Born"
Writer. Byrne
Artist. Byrne
Inker. Byrne
7 pp
Cover: Byrne

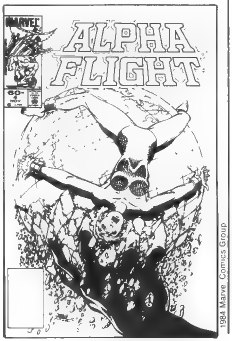
#8, Mar '84
"Cold Hands, Cold Heart"
Writer Byrne
Artist Byrne
Inker: Byrne
17 pp
"Genesis"
Writer Byrne
Artist Byrne
Inker: Byrne
5 pp
Cover: Byrne

#9, Apr '84
"Things Aren't Always What They Seem"
Writer: Byrne
Artist: Byrne
Inker: Byrne
14 pp.
"A Stranger In My Mirror"
Writer: Byrne
Artist: Byrne
Inker: Byrne
8 pp.
Cover: Byrne

#10, May '84
"Blood Battle"
Writer: Byrne
Artist: Byrne
Inker: Byrne
17 pp
"Family Ties"
Writer Byrne
Artist: Byrne
Inker: Byrne
5 pp
Cover: Byrne

#11, June '84
"Set-Up"
Writer. Byrne
Artist. Byrne
Inker: Byrne
Cover: Byrne
21 pp

#12, July '84
". . . And One Shall Surely Die"
Writer. Byrne



Artist: Byrne
Inker: Byrne
Cover: Byrne
38 pp

#13, Aug. '84
"Nightmare!"
Writer: Byrne
Artist: Byrne
Inker. Byrne
Cover: Byrne
21 pp.

#14, Sept '84
"Biology Class"
Writer: Byrne
Artist: Byrne
Inker: Byrne
Cover. Byrne
22 pp

AMAZING SPIDER-MAN

#189, Feb '79
"Mayhem by Moonlight!"
Writer Marv Wolfman
Artist. Byrne
Inker: Jim Mooney
Cover: Byrne/McLeod
17 pp

#190, Mar '79
"In Search of the Man-Wolf-"
Writer: Marv Wolfman
Artist: Byrne
Inker: Jim Mooney
17 pp.

#206, July '80
"A Method in His Madness!""
Writer: Roger Stern
Artist: Byrne
Inker: Gene Day
17 pp.

AMAZING SPIDER-MAN ANNUAL

#12, 1978
Cover: Byrne

#13, 1979
"The Arms of Doctor Octopus!"
Writer· Marv Wolfman
Artist: Byrne
Inker: Terry Austin
24 pp.

AVENGERS

#164, Oct '77
"To Fall By Treachery!"
Writer: Jim Shooter
Artist: Byrne
Inker: Pablo Marcos
17 pp.

#165, Nov '77
"Hammer of Vengeance!"
Writer: Jim Shooter
Artist: Byrne
Inker: Pablo Marcos
17 pp.

#166, Dec '77
"Day of the Godslayer!"
Writer Jim Shooter
Artist· Byrne
Inker· Pablo Marcos
17 pp.

#181, Mar '79
"On the Matter of Heroes!"
Writer· David Michelinie
Artist: Byrne
Inker: Gene Day
17 pp

#182, Apr '79
"Honor Thy Father"
Writer David Michelinie
Artist: Byrne
Inker: Klaus Janson
17 pp

#183, May '79
"The Redoubtable Return of Crusher Creel"
Writer David Michelinie
Artist: Byrne
Inker. Klaus Janson
17 pp

#184, June '79
"Death on the Hudson!"
Writer David Michelinie
Artist: Byrne
Inker· D. Hands
17 pp.

#185, July '79
"The Yesterday Quest!"
Writers: Mark Gruenwald,
Steven Grant,
& David Michelinie
Artist: Byrne
Inker: Dan Green
17 pp.

#186, Aug '79
"Nights of Wundagore!"
Writers: Mark Gruenwald,
Steven Grant,
& David Michelinie
Artist: Byrne
Inker: Dan Green
Cover: Byrne/Austin
17 pp.

#187, Sept '79
"The Call of the Mountain Thing!"
Writer: Mark Gruenwald,
Steven Grant,
David Michelinie
Artist: Byrne
Inker: Dan Green
Cover: Byrne/Austin
17 pp.

#188, Oct '79
"Elementary, Dear Avengers"
Writer: Bill Mantlo
Artist· Byrne
Inkers: Dan Green & Frank Springer
Cover: Byrne/Austin
17 pp.

#189, Nov '79
"Wings and Arrows!"
Writers: Steven Grant, Mark Gruenwald, Roger Stern, & David Michelinie
Artist: Byrne
Inker: Dan Green
Cover: Byrne/Green
17 pp.

#190, Dec '79
"Heart of Stone"
Writers: Steven Grant & Roger Stern
Artist: Byrne
Inker: Dan Green
Cover: Byrne/Green
17 pp.

#191, Jan '80
"Back To The Stone Age!"
Writer: David Michelinie
Artist: Byrne
Inker: Dan Green
17 pp.

#233, July '83
"The Annihilation Gambit!"
Writer: Roger Stern
Artist: Byrne
Inker: Joe Sinnott
22 pp.

CAPTAIN AMERICA

#233, May '79
Cover: Byrne/Villamonte

#238, Oct '79
Cover: Byrne/Milgrom

#239, Nov '79
Cover: Byrne/Austin

#247, July '80
"By the Dawn's Early Light!"
Writer: Roger Stern
Artist: Byrne
Inker: Joe Rubinstein
Cover: Byrne/Rubinstein
17 pp.

#248, Aug '80
"Dragon Man!"
Writer: Roger Stern
Artist: Byrne
Inker: Joe Rubinstein
Cover: Byrne/Rubinstein
17 pp.

#249, Sept '80
"Death, Where Is Thy Sting?"
Writer: Roger Stern
Artist: Byrne
Inker: Joe Rubinstein
Cover: Byrne/Rubinstein
17 pp.

#250, Oct '80
"Cap For President!"
Writer: Roger Stern
Artist: Byrne
Inker: Joe Rubinstein
Cover: Byrne/Rubinstein
17 pp

#251, Nov '80
"The Mercenary and the Madman!"
Writer: Roger Stern
Artist: Byrne
Inker: Joe Rubinstein
Cover: Byrne/Rubinstein
17 pp.

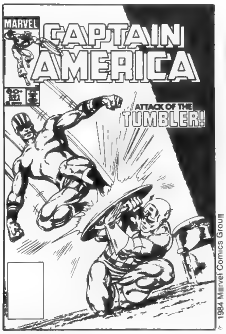
#252, Dec '80
"Cold Fire!"
Writer: Roger Stern
Artist: Byrne
Inker: Joe Rubinstein
"Life and Times of Captain America"
Writer: Roger Stern
Artist: Byrne
Inker: Joe Rubinstein
5 pp.
Cover: Byrne/Rubinstein

#253, Jan '81
"Should Old Acquaintance Be Forgot"
Writer: Roger Stern
Artist: Byrne
Inker: Joe Rubinstein
Cover: Byrne/Rubinstein
22 pp.

#254, Feb '81
"Blood on the Moors"
Writer: Roger Stern
Artist: Byrne
Inker: Joe Rubinstein
Cover: Byrne/Rubinstein
22 pp.

#255, Mar '81
"The Living Legend"
Writer: Roger Stern
Artist: Byrne
Inker: Joe Rubinstein
Cover: Byrne/Rubinstein
22 pp.

#291, Mar '84
Cover: Byrne



CHAMPIONS

#11, Feb '77
"The Shadow From the Stars"
Writer: Bill Mantlo
Artist: Byrne
Inker: Bob Layton
17 pp.

#12, Mar '77
"Did Someone Say . . . the Stranger"
Writer: Bill Mantlo
Artist: Byrne
Inker: Bob Layton
17 pp.

#13, May '77
"The Doom That Went On Forever!"
Writer: Bill Mantlo
Artist: Byrne
Inker: Bob Layton
17 pp.

#14, July '77
"The Creature Called . . . Swarm!"
Writer: Bill Mantlo
Artist: Byrne
Inker: Mike Esposito
17 pp.

#15, Sept '77
"Death Drone!"
Writer: Bill Mantlo
Artist: Byrne
Inker: Mike Esposito
17 pp.

#17, Jan '78
"The Sentinels Hunt Again!"
Writer: Bill Mantlo
Artist: George Tuska
Inker: Byrne
17 pp.

DAREDEVIL

#200, Nov '83
Cover: Byrne/Austin

#203, Feb '84
Cover: Byrne

DOCTOR STRANGE CLASSICS

#4, June '84
Cover: Byrne/Milgrom

FANTASTIC FOUR

#209, Aug '79
"Trapped in the Sargasso of Space!"
Writer: Marv Wolfman
Artist: Byrne
Inker: Joe Sinnott
17 pp.

#210, Sept '79
"In Search of Galactus"
Writer: Marv Wolfman
Artist: Byrne
Inker: Joe Sinnott
17 pp.

#211, Oct '79
"If This Be Terrax"
Writer: Marv Wolfman
Artist: Byrne
Inker: Joe Sinnott
Cover: Byrne/Sinnott
17 pp.

#212, Nov '79
"Battle of the Titans!"
Writer: Marv Wolfman
Artist: Byrne
Inker: Joe Sinnott
Cover: Byrne/Sinnott
17 pp.

#213, Dec '79
"In Final Battle!"
Writer: Marv Wolfman
Artist: Byrne
Inker: Joe Sinnott
Cover: Byrne/Sinnott
17 pp.

#214, Jan '80
"...And Then There Was—One!"
Writer: Marv Wolfman
Artist: Byrne
Inker: Joe Sinnott
Cover: Byrne/Sinnott
17 pp.

#215, Feb '80
"Blastaar!"
Writer: Marv Wolfman
Artist: Byrne
Inker: Joe Sinnott
17 pp.

#216, Mar '80
"Where There Be Gods!"
Writer: Bill Mantlo
Artist: Byrne
Inker: Pablo Marcos
17 pp.

#217, Apr '80
"Masquerade"
Writer: Bill Mantlo
Artist: Byrne
Inker: Joe Sinnott
17 pp.

#218, May '80
"When A Spider-Man Comes Calling!"
Writer: Bill Mantlo
Artist: Byrne
Inker: Joe Sinnott
17 pp.

#221, Aug. '80
"Tower of Crystal...Dreams of Glass!"
Writer: Byrne
Artist: Byrne
Inker: Byrne
17 pp.

#232, July '81
"Back to the Basics!"
Writer: Byrne
Artist: Byrne
Inker: Byrne
Cover: Byrne/Austin
22 pp.

#233, Aug '81
"Mission For A Dead Man!"
Writer: Byrne
Artist: Byrne

Inker: Byrne
Cover: Byrne/Austin
22 pp.

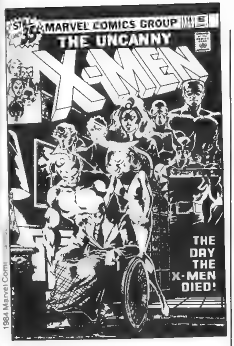
#234, Sept '81
"The Man With the Power!"
Writer: Byrne
Artist: Byrne
Inker: Byrne
Cover: Byrne/Austin
22 pp.

#235, Oct '81
"Four Against Ego!"
Writer: Byrne
Artist: Byrne
Inker: Byrne
Cover: Byrne/Austin
22 pp

#236, Nov '81
"Terror In a Tiny Town"
Writer: Byrne
Artist: Byrne
Inker: Byrne
Cover: Byrne/Austin
40 pp.

#237, Dec '81
"The Eyes Have It"
Writer: Byrne
Artist: Byrne
Inker: Byrne
Cover: Byrne
20 pp

#238, Jan '82
"The Lady Is For Burning!"
Writer: Byrne
Artist: Byrne
Inker: Byrne
Cover: Byrne/Austin
13 pp



"The More Things Change. . . "
Writer: Byrne
Artist. Byrne
Inker: Terry Austin
8 pp
Plus a Susan Richards pin-up page by Byrne

#239, Feb '82
"Wendy's Friends"
Writer. Byrne
Artist: Byrne
Inker: Byrne
Cover: Byrne
22 pp

#240, Mar '82
"Exodus"
Writer. Byrne
Artist: Byrne
Inker· Byrne
Cover: Byrne/Austin
22 pp

#241, Apr '82
"Render Unto Caesar!"
Writer· Byrne
Artist· Byrne
Inker: Byrne
Cover: Byrne/Austin
22 pp

#242, May '82
"Terrax the Untamed"
Writer: Byrne
Artist: Byrne
Inker: Byrne
Cover. Byrne/Austin
22 pp

#243, June '82
"Shall Earth Endure?"
Writer. Byrne
Artist: Byrne
Inker. Byrne
Cover. Byrne
22 pp.

#244, July '82
"Beginnings and Endings"
Writer. Byrne
Artist: Byrne
Inker. Byrne
Cover. Byrne
22 pp

#245. Aug '82
"Childhood's End"
Writer: Byrne
Artist: Byrne
Inker: Byrne
Cover: Byrne
22 pp.

#246. Sept '82
"Too Many Dooms!"
Writer: Byrne
Artist: Byrne
Inker. Byrne
Cover· Byrne
22 pp

#247, Oct '82
"This Land is Mine!"
Writer. Byrne
Artist Byrne
Inker. Byrne
Cover: Byrne
22 pp.

#248, Nov '82
"Nightmare!"
Writer: Byrne
Artist: Byrne
Inker. Byrne
Cover: Byrne
22 pp.

#249, Dec '82
"Man and Super-Man!"
Writer: Byrne
Artist· Byrne
Inker· Byrne
Cover: Byrne
22 pp.

#250, Jan '83
"X-Factor"
Writer· Byrne
Artist: Byrne
Inker: Byrne
Cover: Byrne/Austin
37 pp.
Plus a pin-up by Byrne

#251. Feb '83
"Into the Negative Zone!"
Writer: Byrne
Artist: Byrne
Inker: Byrne
Cover: Byrne
22 pp.

#252, Mar '83
"Cityscape"
Writer: Byrne
Artist: Byrne
Inker· Byrne
Cover: Byrne
22 pp.

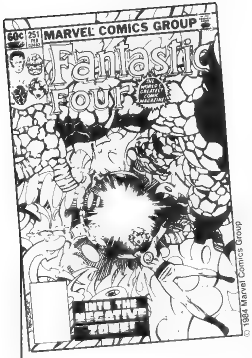
#253, Apr '83
"Quest"
Writer: Byrne
Artist: Byrne
Inker: Byrne
Cover: Byrne
22 pp.

#254, May '83
"The Minds of Mantracora"
Writer. Byrne
Artist. Byrne
Inker. Byrne
Cover: Byrne
22 pp.

#255, June '83
"Trapped!"
Writer: Byrne
Artist: Byrne
Inker: Byrne
Cover: Byrne
22 pp.

#256, July '83
"The Annihilation Gambit!"
Writer: Byrne
Artist: Byrne
Inker· Byrne
Cover: Byrne
22 pp.

#257, Aug '83
"Fragments"
Writer: Byrne
Artist: Byrne
Inker: Byrne
Cover: Byrne
22 pp.



#258, Sept '83
"Interlude"
Writer: Byrne
Artist: Byrne
Inker: Byrne
Cover: Byrne
22 pp.

#259, Oct '83
"Choices"
Writer: Byrne
Artist: Byrne
Inker: Byrne
Cover: Byrne
22 pp.

#260, Nov '83
"When Titans Clash!"
Writer: Byrne
Artist: Byrne
Inker: Byrne
Cover: Byrne
22 pp.

#261, Dec '83
"The Search For Reed Richards!"
Writer: Byrne
Artist: Byrne
Inker: Byrne
Cover: Byrne
22 pp.

#262, Jan '84
"The Trial Of Reed Richards"
Writer: Byrne
Artist: Byrne
Inker: Byrne
Cover: Byrne
22 pp.

#263, Feb '84
"R. And R."
Writer: Byrne
Artist: Byrne
Inker: Byrne
Cover: Byrne
22 pp.

#264, Mar '84
"Inferno"
Writer: Byrne
Artist: Byrne
Inker: Byrne
Cover: Byrne
22 pp

#265, Apr '84
"The House That Reed Built"
Writer: Byrne
Artist. Byrne
Inker: Byrne
11 pp
'Home Are the Heroes"
Writer: Byrne
Artist: Byrne
Inker: Byrne
11 pp.
Cover: Byrne

#266, May '84
"Call Her. . . Karisma!"
Writer: Byrne
Artist: Kerry Gammill (19 pp.), Byrne (3 pp.)
Inker Byrne
Cover: Byrne
22 pp

#267, June '84
"A Small Loss"
Writer: Byrne
Artist: Byrne
Inker: Byrne
Cover: Byrne
22 pp.

#268, July '84
"The Masque Of Doom!"
Writer: Byrne
Artist: Byrne
Inker: Byrne
22 pp

#269, Aug '84
"Skyfall"
Writer: Byrne
Artist: Byrne
Inker: Byrne
22 pp.

#270, Aug '84
"Planet-Fall"
Writer: Byrne
Artist: Byrne
Inker: Byrne
22 pp.

FANTASTIC FOUR ANNUAL

#17, 1984
"Legacy"
Writer: Byrne
Artist: Byrne
Inker: Byrne
Cover: Byrne
48 pp.

FANTASTIC FOUR SPECIAL EDITION

#1, May '84
Four story pages, five pin-up pages, and a wraparound cover by Byrne

FANTASTIC FOUR ROAST

#1, May '82
Writer: Fred Hembeck
Artist: Byrne (2 pages)

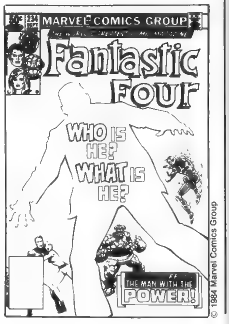
FURTHER ADVENTURES OF INDIANA JONES

#1, Jan '83
Writer: Byrne
Artist· Byrne
Inker: Terry Austin
22 pp.

#2, Feb '83
"22-Karat Doom"
Writer: Denny O'Neil
Artist. Byrne
Inker: Terry Austin
Cover: Byrne/Austin
22 pp.

GIANT-SIZE DRACULA

#5, Jun '75
"Dark Asylum!"
Writer: David Anthony Kraft
Artist· Byrne
Inker: Rudy Nebres
8 pp.



HOWARD THE DUCK

#7, Sept. '80
One full-page illo by Byrne.

HULK ANNUAL

#7, 1978
"The Evil That Is Cast . . ."
Writer: Roger Stern
Artist: Byrne
Inker: Bob Layton
Cover: Byrne/Layton
35 pp.

#9, 1979
"Sasquatch!"
Writers: Roger Stern & Byrne
Artist: Sal Buscema
Inker: Alfredo Alcala
34 pp.

KA-ZAR

#32, June '83
Cover: Byrne

IRON FIST

#1, Nov '75
"A Duel of Iron"
Writer: Chris Claremont
Artist: Byrne
Inker: Al McWilliams
18 pp

#2, Dec '75
"Valley of the Damned!"
Writer: Chris Claremont
Artist: Byrne
Inker. Frank Chiaramonte
18 pp.

#3, Feb '76
"The City's Not For Burning!"
Writer: Chris Claremont
Artist: Byrne
Inker: Frank Chiaramonte
18 pp.

#4, Apr '76
"Holocaust!"
Writer: Chris Claremont
Artist: Byrne
Inker: Frank Chiaramonte
17 pp.

#5, June '76
"When Slays the Scimitar!"
Writer: Chris Claremont
Artist: Byrne
Inker: Frank Chiaramonte
17 pp.

#6, Aug '76
"Death Match!"
Writer: Chris Claremont
Artist: Byrne

Inker: Frank Chiaramonte
17 pp.

#7, Sept '76
"Iron Fist Must Die!"
Writer Chris Claremont
Artist: Byrne
Inker: Frank Chiaramonte
17 pp

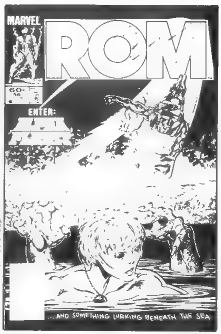
#8, Oct '76
"Like Tigers in the Night!"
Writer: Chris Claremont
Artist: Byrne
Inker: Dan Adkins
Cover: Byrne/Adkins
17 pp.

#9, Nov '76
"The Dragon Dies At Dawn!"
Writer: Chris Claremont
Artist: Byrne
Inker. Frank Chiaramonte
17 pp.

#10, Dec '76
"Kung Fu Killer!"
Writer: Chris Claremont
Artist: Byrne
Inker: Dan Adkins
17 pp.

#11, Feb '77
"A Fine Day's Dying!"
Writer: Chris Claremont
Artist: Byrne
Inker: Dan Adkins
17 pp.

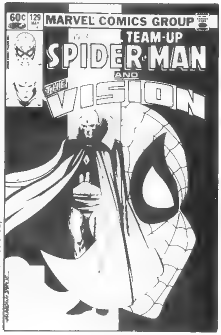
#12, Apr '77
"Assault on Avengers' Mansion!"
Writer: Chris Claremont
Artist: Byrne
Inker: Dan Adkins
17 pp.



#13, June '77
"Target. Iron Fist!"
Writer Chris Claremont
Artist Byrne
Inker. Dan Adkins
17 pp

#14, Aug '77
"Snowfire"
Writer Chris Claremont
Artist Byrne
Inker Dan Green
17 pp

#15, Sept '77
"Enter, the X-Men"
Writer: Chris Claremont
Artist: Byrne



Inker: Dan Green
17 pp

MARVEL GRAPHIC NOVELS

#8: "Super Boxers"
Writer: Byrne
Artist: Ron Wilson
Inker: Armando Gil
Cover: Bill Sienkiewicz
Back cover: Mark Bright
62 pp.

MARVEL PREMIERE

#25, Oct '75
"Morning of the Mindstorm!"
Writer: Chris Claremont
Artist: Byrne
Inker: Al McWilliams
18 pp

#47, Apr '79
"To Steal An Ant-Man!"
Writer: David Michelinie
Artist: Byrne
Inker: Bob Layton
17 pp

#48, June '79
"The Price of a Heart!"
Writer: David Michelinie
Artist: Byrne
Inker: Bob Layton
17 pp.

MARVEL PREVIEW

#14, 1976
"Windholme"
Writer: Chris Claremont
Artist: Byrne
Inker: Terry Austin
51 pp.

MARVEL TEAM-UP

#53, Jan '77
"Nightmare in New Mexico!"
Writer: Bill Mantlo
Artist: Byrne
Inker: Frank Giacoia
17 pp

#54, Feb '77
"Spider In the Middle!"
Writer: Bill Mantlo
Artist: Byrne
Inker: Mike Esposito
17 pp

#55, Mar '77
"Spider, Spider on the Moon!"
Writer: Bill Mantlo
Artist: Byrne
Inker: Dave Hunt
17 pp

#59, July '77
"Some Say Spidey Will Die By Fire . . . Some Say By Ice!"
Writer: Chris Claremont
Artist: Byrne
Inker: Dave Hunt
17 pp

#60, Aug '77
"A Matter Of Love . . . And Death!"
Writer: Chris Claremont
Artist: Byrne
Inker: Dave Hunt
17 pp

#61, Sept '77
"Not All Their Powers Can Save Them!"
Writer: Chris Claremont
Artist: Byrne
Inker: Dave Hunt
17 pp.

#62, Oct '77
"All This and The QE2"
Writer: Chris Claremont
Artist: Byrne
Inker: Dave Hunt
17 pp

#63, Nov '77
"Night of the Dragon"
Writer: Chris Claremont
Artist: Byrne
Inker: Dave Hunt
17 pp.

#64, Dec '77
"If Death Be My Destiny . . "
Writer: Chris Claremont
Artist. Byrne
Inker: Dave Hunt
17 pp

#65, Jan '78
"Introducing, Captain Britain"
Writer: Chris Claremont"
Artist: Byrne
Inker: Dave Hunt
17 pp

#66, Feb '78
"Murderworld"
Writer: Chris Claremont
Artist. Byrne
Inker: Dave Hunt
17 pp.

#67, Mar '78
"Tigra, Tigra, Burning Bright!"
Writer: Chris Claremont
Artist: Byrne
Inker: Dave Hunt
17 pp.

#68, Apr '78
"The Measure of a Man!"
Writer: Chris Claremont
Artist: Byrne
Inker: Bob Wiacek
Cover: Byrne/Rubinstein
17 pp

#69, May '78
"Night of the Living God!"
Writer. Chris Claremont
Artist: Byrne
Inker: Ricardo Villamonte
17 pp

#70, June '78
"Whom Gods Destroy!"
Writer: Chris Claremont
Artist. Byrne
Inker: Tony DeZuniga
Cover: Byrne/Palmer
17 pp

#72, Aug '78

Cover: Byrne/Layton

#75, Nov '78
"The Smoke of that Great Burning!"
Writer: Chris Claremont &
Ralph Macchio
Artist: Byrne
Inker: Al Gordon
17 pp.

#76, Dec '78
Cover: Byrne/Austin

#79, Mar '79
"Sword of the She-Devil"
Writer: Chris Claremont
Artist: Byrne
Inker: Terry Austin
17 pp.

#100, Dec '80
"Cry—Vengeance!"
Writer: Chris Claremont
Artist: Byrne
Inker Bob McLeod
10 pp.

#133, Sept '83
Cover: Milgrom/Byrne

MARVEL TEAM-UP ANNUAL

#7, 1984
Cover: Neary/Byrne

MARVEL TWO-IN-ONE

#43, Sept '78
Writer: Ralph Macchio
Artist: Byrne
Inkers: Sam Grainger, John Tartaglione, & Bruce Patterson
Cover, Byrne/Simonson
17 pp.

#50, Apr '79
"Remembrance of Things Past!"
Writer: Byrne
Artist: Byrne
Inker, Joe Sinnott
17 pp

#53, July '79
"The Inner War!"
Writers: Mark Gruenwald & Ralph Macchio
Artist: Byrne
Inker: Joe Sinnott
Cover, Byrne/Sinnott
17 pp.

#54, Aug '79
"Blood and Bionics"
Writers: Mark Gruenwald & Ralph Macchio
Artist: Byrne
Inker: Joe Sinnott
17 pp

#55, Sept '79
"Giants in the Earth"
Writers: Mark Gruenwald & Ralph Macchio
Artist, Byrne
Inker, Joe Sinnott
17 pp.

#56, Oct '79
Cover: Byrne/Austin

#98, Apr '83
Cover, Hannigan/Byrne

#99, May '83
Cover Hannigan/Byrne

#100, June '83
(No title)
Writer: Byrne
Artist: Ron Wilson
Inkers: Frank Giacoia & Kevin Dzuban
38 pp

OFFICIAL HANDBOOK OF THE MARVEL UNIVERSE

#1, Jan '83
3 characters drawn by Byrne

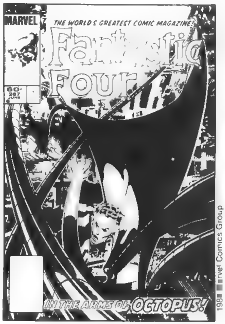
#2, Feb '83
2 characters drawn by Byrne

#3, Mar '83
3 characters drawn by Byrne

#4, Apr '83
3 characters drawn by Byrne

#5, May '83
3 characters drawn by Byrne

#6, June '83
2 characters drawn by Byrne



#7, July '83
6 characters drawn by Byrne

#8, Aug '83
5 characters drawn by Byrne

#9, Sept '83
5 characters drawn by Byrne

#10, Oct '83
3 characters drawn by Byrne

#11, Nov '83
3 characters drawn by Byrne

#12, Dec '83
4 characters drawn by Byrne

#13, Feb '84
4 characters drawn by Byrne
Cover: Byrne/Rubinstein

#14, Mar '84
2 characters drawn by Byrne
Cover: Byrne/Rubinstein

#15, May '84
Cover: Byrne/Rubinstein

POWER MAN/IRON FIST

#102, Feb '84
Cover: Byrne

ROM

#56, July '84
Cover: Byrne

SILVER SURFER SPECIAL EDITION

#1
"Escape . . . into Terror"
Writer, Stan Lee
Plot/Art: Byrne
Inks: Tom Palmer
Cover: Byrne & Palmer
47 pp

THE THING

#1, July '83
"Lifelines"
Writer: Byrne
Artist: Ron Wilson
Inker: Joe Sinnott
Cover, Byrne
22 pp

#2, Aug '83
"For Beauty Passed Away"
Writer: Byrne
Artist, Ron Wilson
Inker, Joe Sinnott
Cover: Wilson/Sinnott
22 pp

#3, Sept '83
"In All the Gathering Gloom"
Writer: Byrne
Artist: Ron Wilson
Inker: Hilary Barta
22 pp.

#4, Oct '83
"I, Monster"
Writer: Byrne
Artist: Ron Wilson
Inker: Hilary Barta
Cover: Brent Anderson
22 pp.

#5, Nov '83
"With Friends Like These. . ."
Writer: Byrne
Artist: Ron Wilson
Inker: Hilary Barta
Cover: Wilson/Milgrom
22 pp.

#6, Dec '83
"Mindscape"
Writer: Byrne
Artist: Ron Wilson
Inker: Hilary Barta
22 pp.

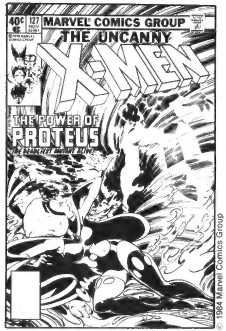
#7, Jan '84
"Two-Fisted Feet!"
Writer: Byrne
Artist: Ron Wilson
Inker: Hilary Barta
17 pp.
"What Th'?!"
Writer: Byrne
Artist: Byrne
Inker: Byrne
5 pp.
Cover: Byrne

#8, Feb '84
"Ancient Evenings, Ancient Pains!"
Writer: Byrne
Artist: Ron Wilson
Inker: Hilary Barta
Cover: Wilson/Sinnott
22 pp.

#9, Mar '84
"What Price a Soul?"
Writer: Byrne
Artist: Ron Wilson
Inker: Joe Sinnott
Cover: Wilson/Sinnott
22 pp.

#10, Apr '84
"Marking Time"
Writer: Byrne
Artist: Ron Wilson
Inker: Hilary Barta
Cover: Wilson/Rubinstein
22 pp.

#11, May '84
"Rocky Grimm, Space Ranger"
Writer: Byrne
Artist: Ron Wilson



Inker: Joe Sinnott
Cover: Wilson/Sinnott
22 pp.

#12, June '84
"Doom!"
Writer: Byrne
Artist: Ron Wilson
Inker: Joe Sinnott
Cover: Wilson/Sinnott
22 pp.

#13, June '84
"Castle of Doom!"
Writer: Byrne
Artist: Ron Wilson
Inker: Joe Sinnott
Cover: Wilson/Sienkiewicz
22 pp.

WHAT IF?

#26, Apr '81
"What If Captain America Were Elected President?"
Byrne is listed as having made "creative contributions."
Cover: Byrne/McLeod

#36, Dec '82
"What If the Fantastic Four Had Not Gained Their Powers?"
Writer: Byrne
Artist: Byrne
Inker: Byrne
Cover: Byrne/Austin
20 pp.

THE X-MEN

#108, Dec '77
"Armageddon Now!"
Writer: Chris Claremont

Artist: Byrne
Inker: Terry Austin
17 pp.

#109, Feb '78
"Home Are the Heroes!"
Writer: Chris Claremont
Artist: Byrne
Inker: Terry Austin
17 pp.

#111, June '78
"Mindgames!"
Writer: Chris Claremont
Artist: Byrne
Inker: Terry Austin
17 pp.

#112, Aug '78
"Magneto Triumphant!"
Writer: Chris Claremont
Artist: Byrne
Inker: Terry Austin
17 pp.

#113, Sept '78
"Showdown!"
Writer: Chris Claremont
Artist: Byrne
Inker: Terry Austin
Cover: Byrne/Layton
17 pp.

#114, Oct '78
"Desolation"
Writer: Chris Claremont
Artist: Byrne
Inker: Terry Austin
Cover: Byrne/Austin
17 pp.

#115, Nov '78
"Visions of Death"
Writer: Chris Claremont
Artist: Byrne

Inker: Terry Austin
Cover: Byrne/Austin
17 pp.

#116, Dec '78
"To Save the Savage Land!"
Writer: Chris Claremont
Artist: Byrne
Inker: Terry Austin
Cover: Byrne/Austin
17 pp.

#117, Jan '79
"Psi War!"
Writer: Chris Claremont
Artist: Byrne
Inker: Terry Austin
17 pp.

#118, Feb '79
"The Submergence of Japan!"
Writer: Chris Claremont
Artist: Byrne
Inker: Ricardo Villamonte
17 pp.

#119, Mar '79
"Twas the Night Before Christmas . . ."
Writer: Chris Claremont
Artist: Byrne
Inker: Terry Austin
17 pp.

#120, Apr '79
"Wanted: Wolverine, Dead Or Alive"
Writer: Chris Claremont
Artist: Byrne
Inker: Terry Austin
17 pp.

#121, May '79
"Shoot-Out at the Stampede!"
Writer: Chris Claremont
Artist: Byrne
Inker: Terry Austin
17 pp.

#122, June '79
"The Trial of Colossus
Writer: Chris Claremont
Artist: Byrne
Inker: Terry Austin
17 pp.

#123, July '79
"Listen—Stop Me If You've Heard It—But This One Will Kill You!"
Writer: Chris Claremont
Artist: Byrne
Inker: Terry Austin
17 pp.

#124, Aug '79
"He Only Laughs When I Hurt!"
Writer: Chris Claremont
Artist: Byrne
Inker: Terry Austin
17 pp.

#125, Sept '79
"There's Something Awful On Muir Island!"
Writer: Chris Claremont
Artist: Byrne
Inker: Terry Austin
17 pp.

#126, Oct '79
"How Sharper Than A Serpent's Tooth . . .!"
Writer: Chris Claremont
Artist: Byrne
Inker: Terry Austin
17 pp.

#127, Nov '79
"The Quality of Hatred!"
Writer: Chris Claremont
Artist: Byrne
Inker: Terry Austin
Cover: Byrne/Austin
17 pp.

#128, Dec '79
"The Action of the Tiger!"
Writer: Chris Claremont
Artist: Byrne
Inker: Terry Austin
17 pp.

#129, Jan '80
"God Spare the Child . . ."
Writer: Chris Claremont
Artist: Byrne
Inker: Terry Austin
Cover: Byrne/Austin
17 pp.

#130, Feb '80
"Dazzler"
Writer: Chris Claremont
Artist: Byrne
Inker: Terry Austin
17 pp.

#131, Mar '80
"Run For Your Life!"
Writer: Chris Claremont
Artist: Byrne
Inker: Terry Austin
Cover: Byrne/Austin
17 pp.

#132, Apr '80
"And Hellfire Is Their Name!"
Writer: Chris Claremont
Artist: Byrne
Inker: Terry Austin
Cover: Byrne/Austin
17 pp.

#133, May '80
"Wolverine: Alone!"
Writer: Chris Claremont
Artist: Byrne
Inker: Terry Austin
Cover: Byrne/Austin
17 pp.

#134, June '80
"Too Late, the Heroes!"
Writer: Chris Claremont

Artist: Byrne
Inker: Terry Austin
Cover: Byrne/Austin
17 pp.

#135, July '80
"Dark Phoenix"
Writer: Chris Claremont
Artist: Byrne
Inker: Terry Austin
Cover: Byrne/Austin
17 pp.

#136, Aug '80
"Child of Light and Darkness!"
Writer: Chris Claremont
Artist: Byrne
Inker: Terry Austin
Cover: Byrne/Austin
17 pp.

#137, Sept '80
"The Fate of the Phoenix!"
Writer: Chris Claremont
Artist: Byrne
Inker: Terry Austin
Cover: Byrne/Austin
35 pp.

#138, Oct '80
"Elegy"
Writer: Chris Claremont
Artist: Byrne
Inker: Terry Austin
Cover: Byrne/Austin
18 pp.

#139, Nov '80
". . . Something Wicked This Way Comes!"
Writer: Chris Claremont
Artist: Byrne
Inker: Terry Austin
22 pp.

#140, Dec '80
"Rage!"
Writer: Chris Claremont
Artist: Byrne
Inker: Terry Austin
Cover: Byrne/Austin
22 pp.

#141, Jan '81
"Days of Future Past"
Writer: Chris Claremont
Artist: Byrne
Inker: Terry Austin
Cover: Byrne/Austin
22 pp.

#142, Feb '81
"Mind Out of Time!"
Writer: Chris Claremont
Artist: Byrne
Inker: Terry Austin
22 pp.

#143, Mar. '81
"Demon!"
Writer: Chris Claremont
Artist: Byrne
Inker: Terry Austin
Cover: Byrne/Austin
22 pp.

CHARLTON COMICS

Doomsday + 1
#1
"Doomsday Minus Two"
Writer: Joe Gill
Artist, Letterer: Byrne
Cover: Byrne
22 pp.

#2
"A Faceless Foe"
Writer: Joe Gill
Artist, Letterer: Byrne
Cover: Byrne
22 pp.

#3
"The Peacekeeper"
Writer: Joe Gill
Artist, Letterer: Byrne
Cover: Byrne
22 pp.

#4
"The Hidden Empire"
Writer: Joe Gill
Artist, Letterer: Byrne
(Heavily rewritten by Byrne)
Cover: Byrne
22 pp.

#5
"Rule of Fear"
Writer: Joe Gill
Artist, Letterer: Byrne
Inks: Duffy Vohland & Bruce Patterson
Cover: Byrne
22 pp.

#6
"All the Beautiful People"
Writer: Joe Gill
Artist: Doug Beaven
Inker, Letterer: Byrne
Cover: Byrne
22 pp.

The seventh issue, "There Will Be No Time," was written and drawn by Byrne, but was never published by Charlton. Bob Layton eventually published it in the last two issues of his Charlton Bullseye.
The first six issues were reprinted in #7-#12.

E-Man (back-up Rog-2000 stories)
#6
"That Was No Lady"
Writer: Nick Cuti
Artist, Letterer: Byrne
7 pp.

#7
"Withering Heights"
Writer: Nick Cuti
Artist, Letterer: Byrne
7 pp.

#9
"The Wish"
Writer: Nick Cuti
Artist, Letterer: Byrne
7 pp.

#10
"Rog-2000 vs. The Sog"
Writer: Nick Cuti
Artist, Letterer: Byrne
7 pp.

(All the Rog-2000 stories were reprinted in Pacific Comics Rog-2000 *collection. See R.C. Harvey's article in this volume.)*

Emergency!
#1
"Hot Cargo!"
Writer: Joe Gill
Artist, Letterer: Byrne
Backgrounds by Vic Bosson
24 pp.

The Many Ghosts of Dr. Graves
#54
Cover: Byrne

Space: 1999
#3
"Bring Them Back Alive"
Writer: Nick Cuti
Artist, Letterer: Byrne
Cover: Byrne
22 pp.

#4
"Demon Star!"
Writer: Nick Cuti
Artist, Letterer, Cover: Byrne
22 pp.

#5
"Gods of the Planet Olympus"
Writer: Nick Cuti
Artist, Letterer, Cover: Byrne
22 pp.

#6
"Flotsam/Survival"
Writer: Byrne
Artist, Letterer, Cover: Byrne
22 pp.

Wheelie and the Chopper Bunch
#2 and #3
Both issues had several stories, all drawn by Byrne.

DC COMICS

Superman
#400
One-page pin-up by John Byrne

Untold Legend of Batman
#1
"In the Beginning"
Writer: Len Wein
Artist: Byrne
Inker: Jim Aparo
21 pp.

FIRST COMICS

E-Man (Rog-2000 story)
#1
One-page spoof of a Twinkies ad comic.
Writer, Artist, Letterer: Byrne
1 p.

SKYWALD

Nightmare
#20
"The Castle"
Writer:
Pencillers: Byrne & Duffy Vohland

SQ PRODUCTIONS

The Art of John Byrne
"Critical Error"
Writer, Artist, Cover: Byrne
25 pp.

EARLIEST KNOWN WORK

A.C.A. Comics *#1 is written, pencilled, inked, and lettered by Byrne.* **The Emery Weal** *is 12 episodes of Gay Guy, a satirical comic strip, written, drawn, and lettered by Byrne.*

1984 Marvel Comics Group